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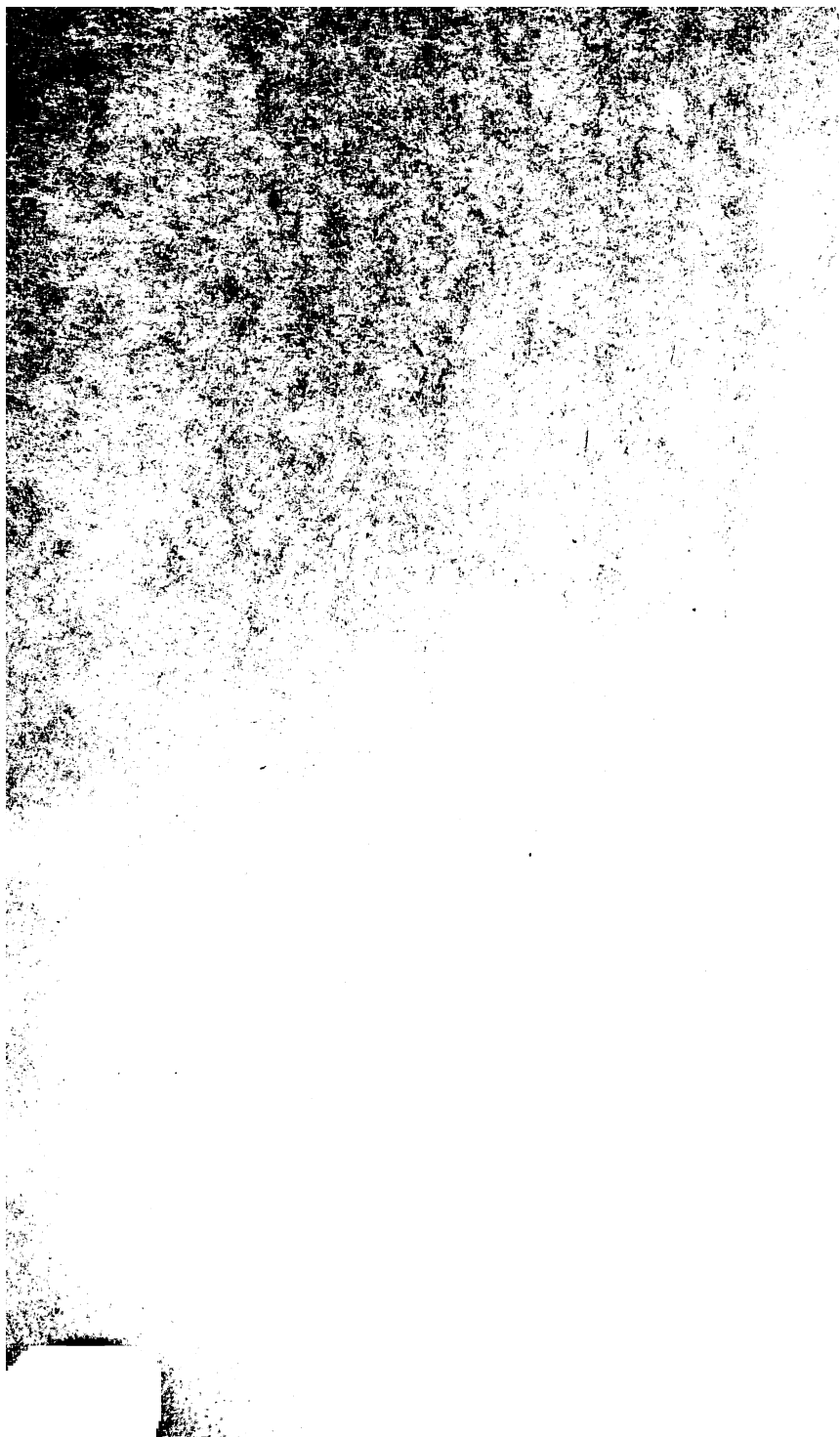
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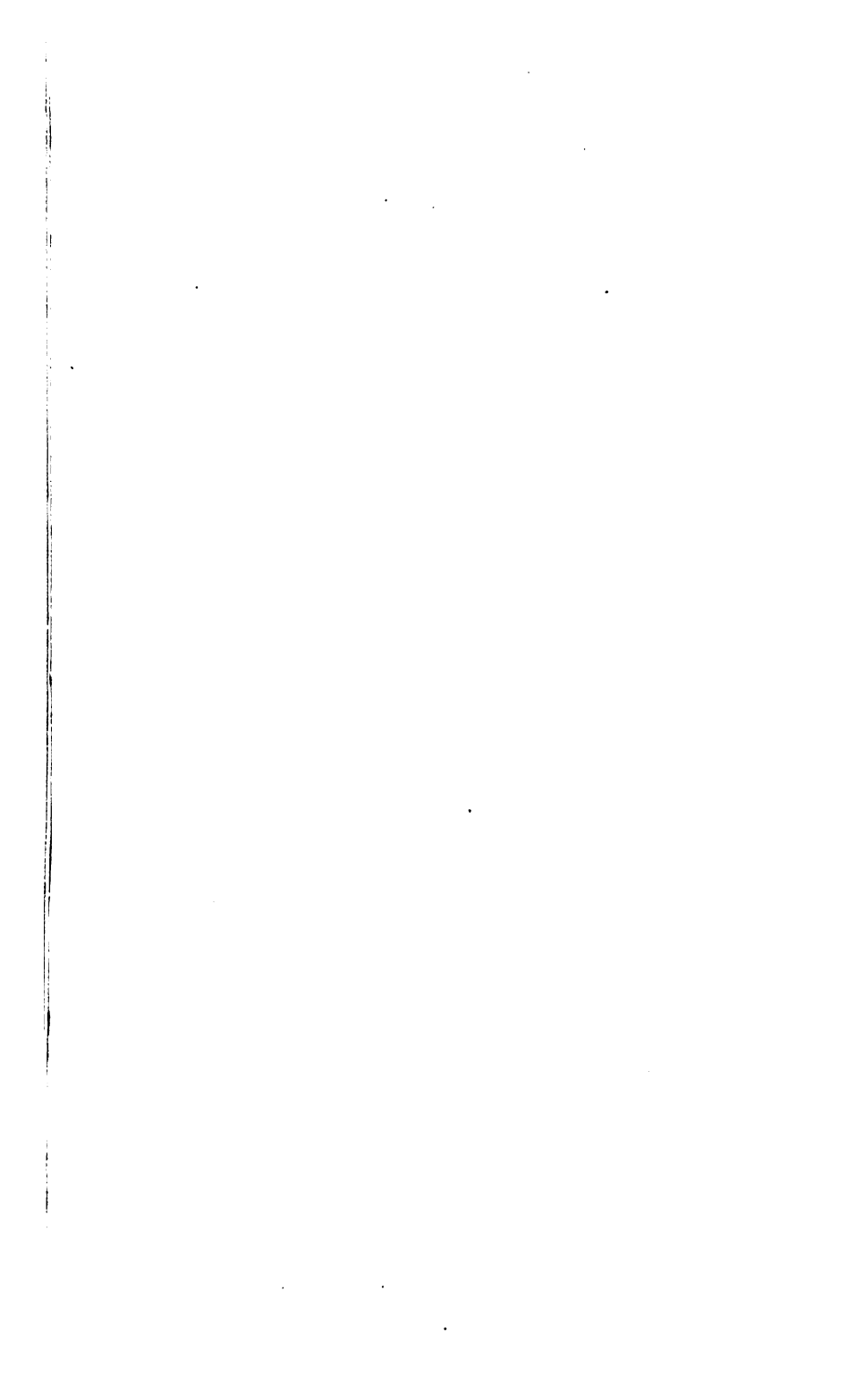
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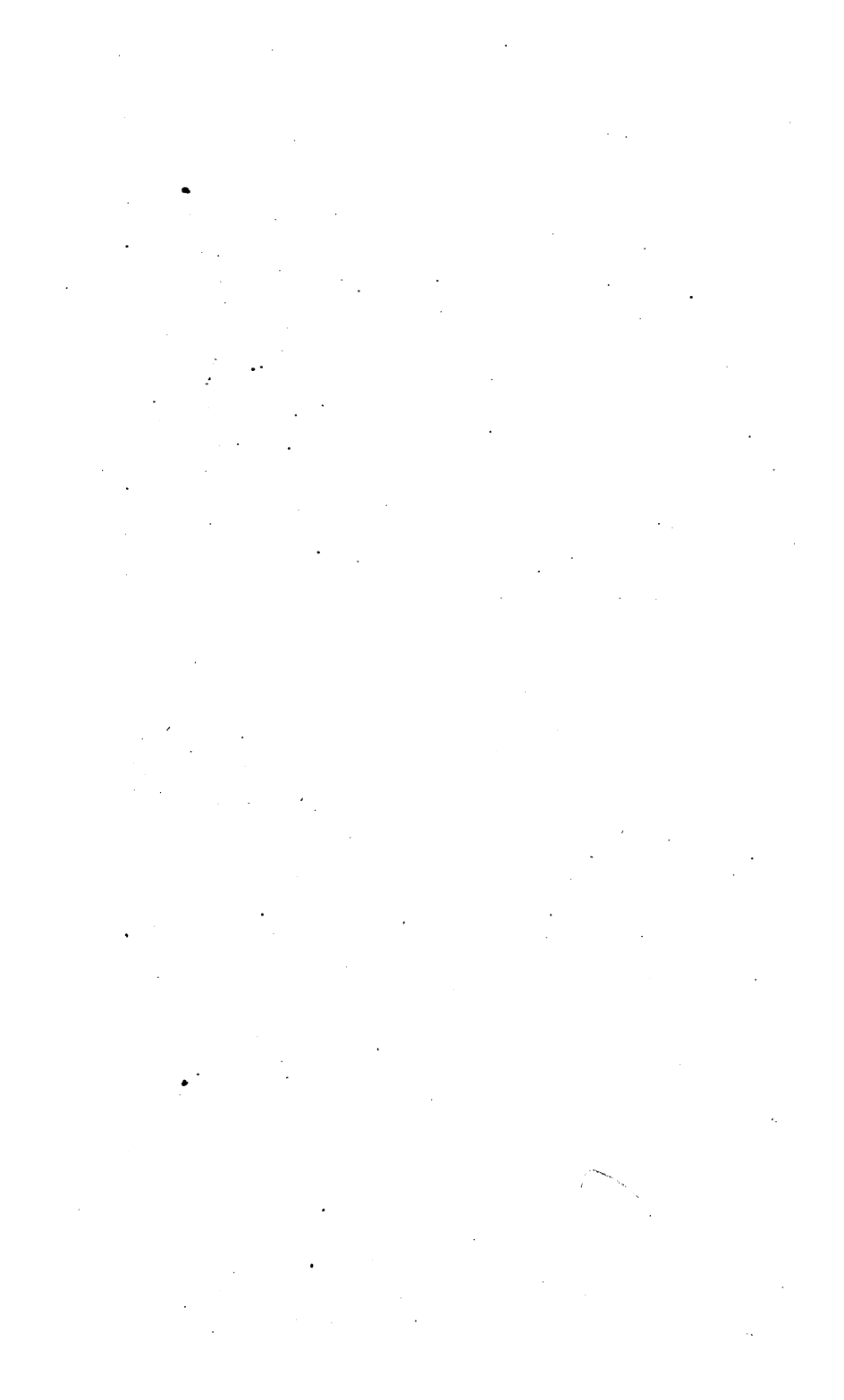


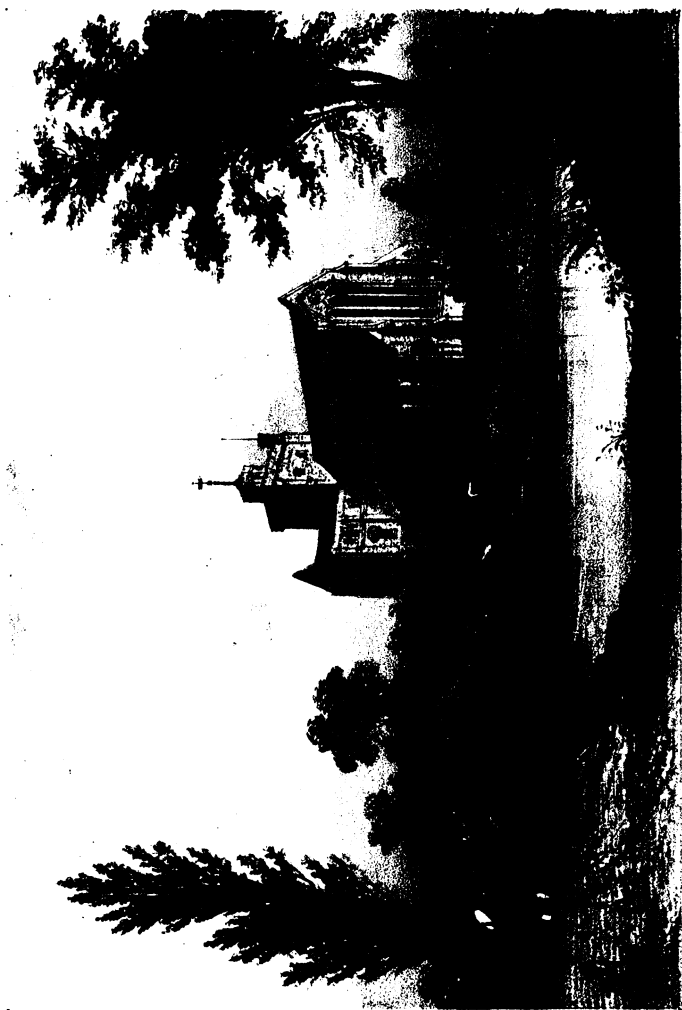


COLLOQUIES,

CHIEFLY UPON POETRY AND POETS.

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COLLOQUIES,

DESULTORY, BUT

CHIEFLY UPON POETRY AND POETS;

BETWEEN

AN ELDER, ENTHUSIASTIC,

AND AN APOSTLE OF THE LAW.

C. J. Lordan.

"One caveat, good Reader, and then God speed thee!—Do not open it at adventures, and by reading the broken pieces of two or three lines, judge it; but read it through, and then I beg pardon if thou dialkest it. Farewell!"

T. ADAMS.

W. W. W. W. W.
B. B. B. B. B.
L. L. L. L. L.

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ROY W. H.
J. L. H.
V. H. H.

CONSIDERATION

IS BEBOUGHT FOR THE FOLLOWING PAGES, ON THE PLEA THAT THEY EMBODY WHAT IS PRESUMED TO HAVE BEEN THE FIRST UNWRITTEN BOOK. FROM SUCH AS MAY NOT PEREMPTORILY REFUSE TO HEAR MORE OF THIS MATTER IS INTREATED THE EXTRAORDINARY BOON OF A PERUSAL OF THE PRELUDE DEDICATORY.—THE MECHANICAL SINGULARITY THEREIN ADVERTED TO, IS NOT CLAIMED FOR THIS EDITION, WHICH CONTAINS ADDITIONS TO THE ORIGINAL VOLUME. BUT FOR A SENTENCE TANTAMOUNT TO “REPRINT,” PRONOUNCED OVER THE FORMER PAGES BY PRESIDENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF LETTERS, THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE RE-PRESENTED THEMSELVES IN BOOK-SHAPE ON A THRONGED STREAM, WHEREIN NONE BUT THE STRONG MAY SWIM. STILL THE NOVEL SPECIES OF REMORSE THAT IMPEDED THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE ON THE SURFACE, MAY POSSIBLY NOW HELP THEM INTO A Surer CURRENT TO THE HAVEN OF THE READER’S FAVOR.

HEADS OF CHAPTERS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I.—INTRODUCTORY	1
II.—THE OLD ENTHUSIAST'S SHELL, WITH A SAMPLE OF ITS ECHOES	33
III.—THE ELDER PROFFERS AN OPINION UPON WORDSWORTH	59
IV.—TURNING MAINLY UPON HOLY MOTHER	89
✓ V.—A FEW WORDS UPON SHAKSPEARE	139
VI.—TWENTY MINUTES TALK ABOUT MILTON	191
VII.—THE ELDER AT HIS BIRTHPLACE	233

TO PROFESSOR WILSON.

RIGHT-ADMIRER SIR,

IT might have very well comported with the line of argument adopted by a certain Pleader in a case of great notoriety to make light of the virtue of a NAME:—" *What's in a Name?*" The ardent advocate to whom I allude, might have been justified in protesting against the undue influence of patronymics, considering they were synonymous with prejudices which the most impassioned pleading could not overrule, and that their authority, had it been decisive, would have insisted on a nonsuit. His interrogative, however, is remarkably happy in the elasticity of its signification: *I* intend it to be read with another punctuation—WHAT'S in a NAME! and thus employ it to convey an emphatic converse meaning to that which it expresses *in re* Romeo Montague.

▲

The pages to which I venture to prefix a Name with Poesy “linked like leaves to flowers,” afford an habitation for sundry cogitative vagrancies over that delectable territory, rich in all floral luxuriance, which considerate Muses have fertilised for the healthful holiday of young hearts, and for the reinvigoration of the world-wearied—to whom the “constant revolution of the same repeated cares” might else

“ make languid life
A pedlar’s pack, bowing the bearer down.”

It would, however, have required a *reckless* confidence in the benignity of PROFESSOR WILSON, to proffer these stray conceits as an acceptable thank-offering for many hours charmed pursuit of his efflorescent pen;—crude as they are in conception, and cramped in conformation, this presentation of them to a Poetic Mind would, if it were written, be indited with a trembling pinion. But certain peculiarities in the construction of the “habitation,” encourage me to hope for a lenient scrutiny of its contents.

Of the little volume* before you, one individual has been composer, and compositor and imprinter

* The last Chapter did not appear in the original edition.

throughout:—this circumstance is only noticeable, inasmuch as it may be a mental and mechanical combination unprecedented, but unimposing. Printers have been authors of renown; and Methuselah, with a knowledge of the art, adequate *matériel*, the patience of Job, and sufficient perseverance, might, singly, have completed a work, voluminous as the bulkiest Cyclopædia of the present day.

But *the pen* has been a stranger to the prose part of its composition, and the scribe's office subverted:—with the exception of acknowledged quotations, I have been unaided by a line of manuscript or other copy. There is a rhythmical *extravaganza* in the sixth chapter, which I very reluctantly signalize in this place, because the skeleton of twenty lines of it, or thereabouts, was pen-traced; the composing-stick has been otherwise my sole mechanical “help to composition.” Memory has supplied me with sentiments syllabled aforetime, to the occupation of three or four pages; so unpremeditated else were its contents, that when, as an employment for leisure, I commenced the chapter called Introductory, it heralded I knew not what. Evidences of a want of design and forethought will, I fear, too frequently recur to substantiate this

fact, and to prevent an innocent illusion I should wish to create, that my "actors" are *not* "spirits," but independent personages, holding separate opinions, and endowed with the gift of tongues.

In proportion as this explanation may be injurious to subsequent *vraisemblance*, it *may* propitiate the severe. The entire absence of a preconcerted plan from the beginning, may "show cause" why no professional uniqueness distinguishes a literary bantling, to which, possibly, the annals of printing may not "parallel a fellow." But having accustomed myself, at distant intervals, to simultaneous composition, I had closed the first colloquy before it occurred to me that perseverance might accomplish a novelty. It was essential to uniformity that I should proceed in the plain style of execution in which I had commenced.

I shall be fortunate, Sir, should its "plainness move you more than eloquence." The practical disadvantages inseparable to the mode pursued in its composition, will (I repeat my hope,) modify the strictures of the considerate.

C. L. LORDAN.

Romsey, March, 1843.

COLLOQUIES.

COLLOQUIES,

DESULTORY AND DIVERSE, BUT CHIEFLY UPON

POETRY AND POETS.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

"There is Poetry that is not written. As I here use it, it is delicate perception; something which is in the nature, enabling one man to detect harmony, and know forms of beauty better than another. It is like a peculiar gift of vision, making the world we live in more visible. The poet hears music in common sounds, and sees loveliness by the wayside. There is not a change in the sky, nor a sweet human voice, which does not bring him pleasure. He sees all the light and hears all the music about him—and this is Poetry."

MANY thanks, O charming MARY RUSSELL MITFORD! for a short and satisfactory definition of a theme, which, when certain of our Poets essay to elucidate, dilates delectably for perusal, but fills with despair the seeker after a summary signification. Look, for instance, at that masterly and stirring reply to *What is Poetry?* in an Appeal for Poets from the pen of Barton;—a glorious whole, which it were gothic to garble by quotation. A marvellous creature, by the

way, that Bernard Barton—worthy of love and honor! Hath Quakerism foregone its frigidness, or how came he in the cold cradle of his caste? and not he alone, but others, whom that same “frozen bosom” hath strangely quickened with poetic breath, and sent forth in poetic guise, lovely as “yellow cowslip and pale primrose from flowery lap of May.” The Howitts among these, and especially Saint MARY!—where is verse more suffused by Innocency than hers,—more guileless and gladsome,—more redolent with the air of the Garden anterior to the great Mother’s misdeed? How easy—were the Law one whit less inexorable—how easy to conceive a mental reservation, made in Mary’s favor, by Eve, before the Fall!

Among the multifarious subjects which, in our days, our fathers’, and, perhaps, in annals yet more remote, have attracted, instructed, or diverted the public mind, what singular or individual subject has retained a potency so perennial as that of POETRY? Chronologers who descend to the minutiae of modern times, will, in all conscience, have need of flexible pens to pourtray faithfully the fluctuations of feeling and of general opinion which have characterised the age;—its web has indeed been of “a mingled yarn, good

and ill together;”—and whether, in the judgment of posterity, glory or shame shall be deemed to predominate in *their* review of the past proximate, the historian, if metrically inclined, may thus impartially usher in his lucubrations:—

“Admire, exult, despise, laugh, weep, and mourn,—
For here there is much matter for all feeling.”

But, (let us hope that the symptom be not necessarily vicious!) the mind created “upright,” has of late approved itself so fecund with “inventions,”*—has so diversely disported with fantasy, fanaticism, and folly,—that few of the swarming “topics of the day” can be dignified by the record or expected at the hands of the chronologer. The age has developed lineaments which, however, are British, or, in other words, are bold, vigorous, and philanthropic, and these will find an “habitation and a name” in the imperishable page;—as to the host of bubbles, over whose birth trumpets were blown, sometimes by fools, at others, by knaves—*they* have evaporated, as was inevitable, before the breath of

“Time’s old daughter, Truth.”

These, if they deserve the mention of their paternity,

* “God made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions.”—*Ecclesiastes*.

were chiefly the offspring of Politics *in a phrenzy*; but the "fitful fever" of the parent has subsided, and its morbid progeny sleep well. The mild genius of Poetry will probably experience in times future, as it has experienced recently, the strongest check to its diffusiveness and, consequently, to its dominion, in the jealousy and turbulence of that spirit,—just now subdued, but "scotched, not killed,"—which smoulders in the body politic:—a restless spirit whose element is contention, troubled in its very repose, and swiftly, with a fancied right or fancied wrong, making

"all Europe ring, from side to side."

Freest of all lands from monster-violences of Faction, yet not without her peccadillos is this saucy, sea-girt Albion—and could her white cliffs blush, as deep a pink as dyes the brier-rose might tinge her ocean-aspect in contrition for occasional foibles. But Britain now is growing less Babel-like, and, politically speaking, we English people are becoming more "of one language and of one speech:" for notwithstanding that (in perilous identification of the *vox populi* with the *vox Dei*,) the old and solid carved-work of our good ship, "The State," has been threatened by utilitarian axe and hammer, the proud bark rears her

head again flauntingly, as conscious of invulnerable bulwarks and of skilful pilotage. Be it as 't may, the manly* Mariner at the helm—who believes her buoyancy to be a property infinite—will by no means risk her *stranding*; though the ship's superseded company predict foul weather, and say the subsidized sea will be found surgy in many places and tempestuous.

“ In your modern books for the most part,” said Coleridge, “ the sentences in a page have much the same connection with each other that marbles have in a bag—they touch without adhering:” in the actual perpetration of irrelevancy how just appears the observation! yet art thou, gentle Reader, forewarned, that in these pages many a swerving from strict connectedness may be expected; and therefore pray we that Nature, in thy apportionment of attributes, may have endowed thee with a less austere regard for “unities” and “oneness” than that developed by Mr. Curdle, in his profound disquisitions upon the essentialities of the legitimate Drama.

But on a scribe who cannot “ wander at his own sweet will ” without having to travel back again, his

* For the propriety of this appellative *vide* the Premier's speeches in propounding and defending the Income-Tax Act.

errings avenge themselves; and the spirit of digression is certainly of that rebellious class which "no exorcism can bind." *Revenons!* Before the word *politics* escaped us we were adverting to the pinnacle which POETRY has serenely maintained in a discordant and distracted generation; shedding, from the lofty summit on which her seat is fixed, an influence benign, pacific, and ennobling, through all the acrimony of political and literary contest,—the birth, rise, and fall of hydra-headed faction,—and the busy dissemination of doctrines, pestilent though ephemeral, and demoralising although delusive.

Not to detain thee, dear Reader, longer on a dubious threshold, I will hint at what may be anticipated in the following papers. In the early spring of the year of grace, forty-one, it was my lot literally *to stumble* on an individual, in whose companionship, originating in this contingency, Time seemed to augment the velocity of his flight. Age, as I afterwards discovered, had dealt leniently with him; for though in close proximity with the grand climacteric, his visage was little marred by furrows, and hoar hairs have won reverence for many a younger brow. He had been an enthusiast in admiration of poetry and poets, nay was himself a poet according to the tenets

of Miss Mitford,—one of the “many that” (says a Voice from Rydal Mount,) “are sown by Nature;” and this enthusiastic temperament was still the idiosyncrasy of the man. Externally, with one exception, his aspect was so unmarked by peculiarity, that in the thronged streets of a city the majority would have honored him far less than Wordsworth’s Wanderer, and have passed him without remark. But they, who, from accident or audacity, had looked in for a few consecutive moments at the lattice-lights of his soul, forgot rudeness in yielding to fascination—so incessantly-varying was the expression seen there. Yet never in their unrest were they uncomely lights to look upon—the revealers never of repulsive passions—but, pure as the scintillations of a star, repudiated all sympathy with the sordidness which degrades and the vices which pollute the crowd.

He was of average stature, and his nether proportions were arrayed in that old-gentlemanly garb, by ancient scriptural translators imputed (in *name* at least) to primitive times, and to the invention of one of our first parents—the paternal ancestor, no doubt. Supplements in the shape of gaiters, of a dark hue to match their antecedents, completed the covering of locomotives of no ungraceful structure, and ex-

tended over the major part of shoes, well-shaped and rather accurately fitted. His upper garment, less than any other, betrayed subserviency to the Parisian idol; for the placid artist whom he delighted to honor, establishing each primal pattern as a precedent absolute, and "nursed at happy distance" from, or paying platonic indifference to, conflicting Reports of Fashion, never tortured his patron's body or kindled ire in his flashing eye, by chasing a fugitive *comme il faut* for the more becoming decoration of his person. That unreasonable (and, were it not for custom, unseemly) item, which, without the recommendation of comfort or elegance, humanity has so long chosen, under one *contour* or another, for the conservation of the cranium from ungenial elements or casual assaults—that formal and vacant product of a block, which Englishmen call *hat*, as it appeared on the personage of whom I speak, was in keeping with the *ensemble*. That part of it which the half-gallon measure at a potato-shop most strikingly illustrates, was rather low than lofty, and would have made a lucrative gauge for the merchant if employed in such a dispensation of his wares. Its margin was capacious, and, slightly aiding gravity, served also to render less evident to first-sight the swift vicissitudes of visionary expression to which I

have adverted; but, in further reference to this “peculiar eye,” its keenness of perception (I would aver with humility) was not surpassed by the Wanderer’s in the Excursion. In youth it had been subject to short-sightedness; and now, from causes clear, I believe, to oculists, Time, so far from clouding, clarified its powers. Indeed, the vigor of this faculty in one so old was almost incredible; nor was it until after long intercourse that I, who met him oft, was made to comprehend the full *reach* of that tremendous organ, and then by an acquisition of intelligence more sudden and startling than the stoppage of a bank to an American. My friend—for in sooth he and I were soon

“A pair of friends, though I was young
And he was sixty-two”—

my friend (I mention it to thee in a whisper, fair Reader,) existed in a state of celibacy, sometimes miscalled single blessedness; [a man who knew what happiness meant so well as he, lived not designedly so, you may be sure—but of the causes, peradventure, anon:] and there came occasionally to brighten the old Sponsor’s abode by her presence, and make it more melodious with the sweet outpourings of her

solicitude than it was wont to be with poets' voices, a Visitant, lovely enough to be ideal, but happily of more perdurable material than "dreams are made of." With this fair form, when acquaintanceship had duly ripened into familiarity, I commenced a kind of telegraphic correspondence—the signals consisting of amatory glances and sighs; and confiding too implicitly in the denseness of that curtain which Old Age lowers, with hasty or gentle hand, on eye and ear, we saw in the Ancient's presence no absolute impediment to *all* communication.—So we continued to exchange dispatches, till the conspiracy demanded a *dénouement*, and we resolved—she, of course, reluctantly—that "the catastrophe should be a nuptial." That only which allied perplexity with passion was the unquestioned fact, that Mary's godfather was as profoundly in the dark about her leaning "to the soft side of the heart," as (if there be truth in tory tattle) was wont to be a merry ex-chief-minister, touching the movements and projects of his right-trusty and well-beloved co-mates in the executive.

The happiest day of one's life is not invariably approached by pleasurable steps. The business of oral confession is embarrassing to the most voluble tongue, if the tale it tells to the ear mostly concerned be one

of *truth*; but the *embarras* augmenteth mightily if another avowal be expedient. However, having to leave town for an indefinite space, and reflecting that wishes “had not a body in them” to make confession by proxy, I racked up my resolution to the highest degree of desperation, and with stammered accent and in paralytic phrase besought to inform him of—that—which—“he had *read* (if outward signs of things within *could* be read) connectedly, from alpha to omega, and of which he flattered his discernment he could have given *me* the earliest information!”

He was a bachelor, but he loved—the poets and his godchild in particular, all mankind in general. His conversation, when it turned not on practical subjects, was poetic in conception, and often poetic in expression, and was enriched and stimulated by an exuberancy of quotation. It is some of such that I shall endeavour, from crude and hasty notes, to transcribe. Where there may appear intelligence, the praise be his; where insipidity, the reproach be mine: and this must, I fear, frequently occur—for charms of voice, impressiveness of gesture, and eloquence of eye, are efficient auxiliaries to *any* theme—too subtle, alas! to be “turned into shape” by any but a “poet’s

pen;" and even by that inspired instrument, are seldom in strict fidelity transfixed on the poet's page.

It only remains, among preliminaries, to relate *how* I became acquainted with the individual I have very imperfectly described; and here a fitting occasion presents itself (at least, in my opinion, which I submit with deference,) for some elucidation of the first person in the singular number in this narration. My *dramatis personæ* are limited, and the expediency of personal portraiture will consequently, and perhaps fortunately, be unfrequent. Nevertheless, where a prolonged intercourse is probable, it is preferable to foreknow something of one's *camarade*;—nay, it is desirable, though he be but the *convive* of a festal hour, or the companion in a stage-coach.—In steam-carriages such prescience is a matter of indifference,—so is a pleasant prospect and a brawling brook,—everything, in short, except the bursting of an engine or sepulchral symptoms in a tunnel.

Be it then known unto thee, friendly Reader, by these presents, which come greeting, that the part I was to act upon the stage of life (provided I should retain an essential principle,) was appointed for me ere I had emerged from swaddling-clothes. At what precise period in the present century I made my *début*

in a part which, like the lion's (allotted to Snug*), is done "extempore, for it is nothing but roaring," it is not pleasant to communicate. A desire to avoid divulging the exact antiquity of the chronicle commenced by Time coëval with our birth, is a delicate refinement now so generally displayed, that a definite reference to the calendar is out of date, and, indeed, indicates eccentricity in a writer. The *cause* may be questionable—whether this exquisite sensibility be fostered by the increase of infant seminaries sanctioned by an enlightened legislature, or by the diffusion of liberal arts and sciences, by ultra-liberal hawkers promulgated upon the lowest possible terms on the mercurial side of nothing—the cause, I repeat, may be questionable, but this effect is undeniable, that an antipathy to reveal with precision the passage of Time over our heads, is becoming universal as intelligence. It seems to be a resolution of the day, that if the mighty Hunter's† reckless Whipper-in *will* ride rough-shod over this corporeal compound, his defacements shall not be noisily blazoned but rather sighed over secretly. So that (out of life-insurance offices) the utmost admission made consists of a plaintive

* *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii. 1.

† "Death, that mighty Hunter!"—*Night Thoughts*.

iteration of the Patriarch's lament—"few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."

I borrow from the Prophet the paternal, maternal, and grand-maternal decree concerning myself: here it is briefly,—"*To the law!*" I grew up in the dangerous and isolated position of an only son—not dangerous because isolated, but because idolised. I always foresee fearingly the fate of an only son—shudderingly if there be a grandam in existence. A unique "pledge," in such a case, is more hapless and more to be lamented over than the least-likely to be redeemed at a pawnbroker's. To every volition of his will there is regard—to every appeal, assent; and how can either teeth or temper maintain a purity against indulgences, dispensed with freer hand than that of Pope of Rome in direst poverty! Much less to be expected then, from such matriculation, is any premature *penchant* for those interesting studies and that agreeable discipline adjudged by Lord Eldon to be essential to such as hope to live by the law.

My forensic future was proverbial in my boyhood, and numberless were the exhortations to docility and studiousness to which it supplied a text. "I heard them, but I heeded not." The pedagogue to whose training I was entrusted at a later stage, bewailed my

“mania for wood-walking and vagaries in verse, which for the most part were vanity, and would doubtlessly end in vexation of spirit;” but was too tender-hearted to chastise, and, like Southey’s, “never consumed birch enough in his vocation to make a besom.” How strongly *some* oddities protest against oblivion! Poor M—! never shall I forget the “anger, insignificantly fierce,” which, when it distorted thy patient features, was certain to defeat its purpose, provoking to risibility, with difficulty suppressed, the culprit it was intended to daunt. Nor ever can I fail to remember those quiet bubbleings from thy natural fount of humour, whose current the cares of a contentious wife and seven clamorous bantlings had not sufficed entirely to dam.

M— astounded and delighted me a few weeks ago, by presenting himself at my chambers. London has always a choice collection of comicalities in human shape, or claiming a kindred with humanity, and the worthy dominie of D— (in the far west) was no mean metropolitan marvel during his sojourn in the vast city, “whose streets,” quoth he, “are verily interminable, presenting a changeless perspective of sooty dwellings, dimly visible through an atmosphere of smoke.” M. was an amateur of lowly pretensions on the violin; and

in the lull of holiday-freedom he sought in psalmody a refuge from connubial reproach, which yielded to but one assuaging influence—sleep. M. had a tune on the title of which he jested with lugubrious levity—There is balm (said he) in *Gilead*! Conscious of his enjoyment of sweet sounds, I insisted on his accompanying me to a concert in Hanover-square; and during the plaudits which followed a pathetic aria from a female singer, he remarked, with a physiognomical expression in which humour, ecstasy, and gravity were strangely mingled, “Of a verity, Mr. C., yon syren’s was the sweetest melody that, in the years of my experience, I ever heard produced by a *Birch*! *”

The season of boyhood is certainly as swift of wing as the seasons which succeed it—ay, by the light of Memory, whose property it is to condense tribulation and to dilate joy, it appears scarcely less swift than that Spring of the seasons of the soul—its first love. Before I was half prepared to relinquish my capacity as

“a Dreamer among men,
Indeed an *idle* Dreamer,”

I was summoned to sterner engagements, in the coil of which, narrowing as it did the boundaries of all

* It was the *cantatrice* of that name who sung.

previous pleasures, I syllabled, in *con espressione* monotony,

“ Ah, happy years! who would not be again a boy?”

Let all on the side male who cannot plead guiltless of this ejaculation, in spirit if not in the very letter, come with me hereupon to an arbitrement; and as many elegant minds have imbibed many unintelligible fancies from “ The Childe,” who, were the state of childhood again their own, would not appear as *boys*, either by creation or by choice, let us embrace the supplicants of both sexes, and determine *who are they* that—were the change optional—would antedate their lives agreeably to their longings.

Not the youth who is professing love, nor the maiden who is pondering upon marriage.

The youth might who has gone before the priest, and finds himself nearer purgatory than paradise; and so might a wife wedded “ by attorneyship,” or the mother of a thankless child.

Not the youth who is advancing to manhood and to great possessions—to the freedom of majority and the unrestrained right to do as he likes with his own.

Such a “ major” might who has gained discretion and lost his domain; and so might a young man

made old by excesses ; so might a saint in an outburst of innocency, and a sinner in a paroxysm of despair.

So might he who hath seceded from vice, and is troubled at the tears he hath occasioned, or harrowed by the heart he may have broken.

So might he to whom the moral aspect of the time is "dark as Erebus," and who is discontented at everything.

But so would not he who knows that progressive privileges attend progressive age, and each nobler in its order:—that intellectual advancement, founded upon holy Truth, is the superworthy aim, congenial element, and noblest safeguard of the soul—its fitting discipline, in the twilight-hour of its terrestrial sojourn, for the cloudless immutable meridian of its celestial exaltation.

It is a work of considerable difficulty—which increases daily—to keep one's footing on the road to Honor, beset as it now is beyond all precedent, by a host of aspirants beyond all calculation. It is the struggling, hustling, anxious course, on which the million compete, and the few unconcernedly regard. And of the crowd which enter for the race, how few attain the goal—of the countless array of com-

petitors, how scanty are the gifted with the garland! That ramification of the said road which leadeth unto legal eminency, is especially notorious for its tortuosity and glorious uncertainty; and many a chancellor and chief baron in nocturnal visions (which befriend*), has, in the reality of broad day, found himself still *below* the bar, and there not seldom unlike the disputative angels—"in wandering mazes lost." With all my respect for that learned body to which my sire supplied an insignificant limb in my unworthy person, I did not suddenly burn to be esteemed a Daniel in judgment, nor was I sensible of any instantaneous exhilaration from inspiring ether oracularly rarified, nor was I roused to emulation by the conflict of the courts. A simple summary of the subjects with which it was necessary to be conversant, convinced me that Cromwell had singularly fallen upon truth when he said, that, "there being so many law-books of great bulk, so many old musty records and reports, as that after the time spent in school-learning, the rest of the time of the flower of a man's life would be little enough to read them over and peruse them." *Vigilantibus non dormientibus subserviunt leges*, should be

* "Night visions may befriend,.....
Our waking dreams are fatal."—Night Thoughts.

an aphorism in as constant repetition with a student, as his "*Ave*" with the suppliant of a certain creed. No doubt the truism is distressing, but it is salutary. If, thought I, I devote myself to this "sage and serious doctrine," it must be at the sacrifice of pursuits infinitely more pleasurable, though certainly less profitable, if estimated by the Hudibrastic standard—

"What is the worth of any thing
But so much *money* as 'twill bring?"

Then, too, I had scruples, suggested by admiration of Consistency and reverence of Truth, which, perhaps, but for lofty prototypes in punctilio, I might have coyly concealed. To lie like truth,—to imitate in *one* particular a celebrated parliamentary refugee,

"Hazer lo blanco negro, y lo negro blanco,"—

and with the consciousness of crime to assume and argue as for innocence, were hard to be reconciled with preconceived notions of the sanctity of Right, or made conformable to a moral creed, of which it was a primary article that "The simple energy of Truth needs no ambiguous interpretation." Yet if such reasons could prevail upon the noble and high-minded father of Hale, with so much force as to

induce him to retire from the practice of his profession, to what can we look for a more effective confutation of their right to prevail, than to the character of his illustrious son?—in the contemplation of which I derived a quietus for *this* order of compunctious visitings.

My countenance was not always “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of” parchment which it now wears, and on the eve of my entry at Lincoln’s-inn, I cogitated on a subject of mutual concern with myself and grandmother (*not* Blackstone). I had still sympathy enough with rustic vulgarity to look lovingly on a visage whose ruddy tinge betokened a connexion with the heart,—a connexion, the existence of which in lawyers is sometimes disputed by the profane, on other grounds than that of a bloodless physiognomy. It was grievous to think that ere long I might as strikingly resemble “a thing that ne’er had life” as did respectively H— and B— and P—, whose ghostly apparitions flitted before me, like weird and warning monitors, their livid features dilating in awful elongation, till the sphere proper to the masticatory process appeared in each like an emporium of ivory tusks. And these, not long since, had been “sweet-faced men as one shall see in a summer’s day;”

and, fitted once to personate Pyramus, could henceforth be counted as stars—perhaps only as satellites—in the Apothecary line for ever! But the “venerable Maid” has no more regard for the pride of the physical constitution, than Miss Mary-Ann Walker for the pride of the political; and

“The visage wan, the purblind sight,”

are phases and signs which the prejudices of the multitude obstinately identify with ability. I remember once on the circuit leaving the court-house or hall at Salisbury, on the heels of smiling Mr. M—; and as he turned a corner, while I remained at the window of a book-shop, I overheard a countryman say to his companion, alluding to the comely barrister, “Now, if I did want a laayer, I wouldna choose he; —*he be a dale too fat and pleasant-looking for a laayer!*”

Enfin, (dissyllabic darling of our neighbours, help me to an end!) *enfin*, I became that which I am. Blackstone, in his “Farewell to the Muse,” enumerates a train of penalties, contingent with the fervent embrace of “fair Justice,” which are penalties although poetically clothed, as pills made palatable with sweetmeat are still physic. But, comprehensive as is his

catalogue of contingent ills, there is a *remainder* unmentioned, before which all recited evils “hide their diminished heads:” can the *briefless* need a reminder that *their* condition is not included in his detail of professional calamities? But the sanguine temperament of youth is not prone to anticipate chagrin or privation, and dwells more interestedly on arenas of legal contention—anticipates the applausive hum of courts, the murmured homage to eloquence—forefancies championship and conquest; and preconceives the florid invocation, resistless argument, and eloquent propitiation of a decree, on which are suspended the absorbing interests of Life, and Fame, and Honor;—and speeds, by an ideal path, to renown, preferment, ease. Soon, on the stoicism of adolescence, ambition works; and soon I looked at *this*, the bright side of the scene. Hume (the historian) estimates a natural disposition to view things on the sunny side, as more than equivalent to a fortune of £10,000 a year.—A living economist might think the calculation hasty, and feel disposed to cavil at so large a “tottle.” In embracing law I had, moreover, home anticipations—not to realise, for they were utopian, but to cherish, for they were fond. Advising, after twelve months application, with a visitor at the paternal residence,

on a plain principle, a copious (and superfluous) use of technicalities convinced my father that my time had been well spent, and threw around me the halo of an oracle in the dim eyes of a venerable maternal ancestor, who would "die happily could she live to see me a judge"—her *ne plus ultra* of forensic dignity. Dear old Lady! without this anodyne her "sleep of death" was peaceful as a pleasant dream, and little recked she of the superadded "labor and sorrow" that must have been entailed on her by the fruition of her wish. For my own part, my aspirations are less presumptuous; and a silk gown, which never would have occurred to her as a desideratum with men, would appease my longings and be gratefully acknowledged.

Prolivity, O Reader! is, as thou mayest haply know, peculiar to the Law and its disciples; and if herein I stand accused of circumlocution, would that I could truly interpret to thee that encouragement to expatiate which now I feel, in assured freedom from the frowns of impatient jurymen, ungifted with eye or ear to comprehend the subtleties of the statute-book, and willing to cut off Magna Charta from their children, so they—sires of the spirit of Esau—might 'scape judicial durance vile, devour their pottage at-home, and rejoin their aprons.

On an April morning in 41, I was proceeding to my chambers in ——. I had been engaged during the greater part of the night in a complicated investigation, and having arrived at an opinion which I considered to be as well-grounded as it would be satisfactory to my client, I was disembarrassed of care, and my spirit seemed gifted with the volatility of an angel's wing. "Town-imprisoned," as gentle Mary terms it (William Howitt's Mary, not mine), town-imprisoned, we taste but a dilution of the joy-enkindling elixir which Delight, prime almoner to the Queen of seasons, pours lavishly by wood, and field, and stream, in the golden light of an April morn. Yet, weakened as becomes the pure effluence by commixture with the murky atmosphere of busy haunts, it still retains ingredients which inspire with a joyous consciousness of the time; and even in the clamour of a city the heart recognises and leaps lithely at the voice of Spring. For stony limits may sooner shut out Love* than exclude Nature; and when the all-animating Spring passes over creation, with her vivifying breath making the old world young again, her influence operates in man like a renewal of God's

* "With Love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold Love out."—Romeo and Juliet.

breath of life; and the indefinable exultation which rises in his bosom attests but *his* participation in the instinctive and insuppressible sympathy which all things living own for *youth*—the doctrine of whose infinite prolongation in a happier sphere lends the tint of transport to fabled felicity, and gilds the pinions of a surer and sublimer Hope. *Eternal youth!* What other epoch of existence can imagination appropriate to the glad heritage of bliss? Not the dawn of capacity, or its decline; not immaturity or imbecility—but the ever-ripening, ever-rosy Morn;—Morn which prevails in perpetuity, and which cannot hasten Noon, for Noon is Night's precursor, and Night may not spread her sable mantle over the Realm of the Rejoicing!

On the morning to which I have adverted, I had resigned myself to the Spirit of the Air,—

“ The pleasant season did my heart employ;
My old remembrances went from me wholly,
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.”

Who has not smiled at his own locomotive irregularities, when governed by the impulses of an ecstasy to which all temporal care is alien, and inspired with

which the human heart yearns, from its most hallowed depths, with the boundless desire TO BLESS?—

“ To me that morning did it happen so;”

and having, in changing mood and by changing motion, nearly attained my destination, I had lingered in loving dalliance before the attractive exposition of a bibliopolist—one of those tempting arrays of title-pages, which to this day (unless urged onwards by a professional pressure from without,) detain me with the virtue of an arrest. There were treatises, by master-minds, on the Religion which reconciles the contradictions and irradiates the oft-beclouded perspective of life; on the pharmaceutic Science, by which purchasers might secure an immortality *ici bas*; and on Law, by which its mysteries were simplified to the scale of Readings made Easy. And, above these, a rank of Poets, living and dead—if indeed true Poets *can* die—cherished titles all, the humblest of which by mere articulation sounds a chord that kindles rapture. There were—but what need to recapitulate names “ familiar as household words?” Last of all stood Burns; and, swift as thought, the rapture within me found utterance in jocund words of song:—

“ O LIFE ! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy’s rays the hills adorning !
Could-pausing Caution’s lessons scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys at th’ expected warning,
To joy and play ! ”

Then, lest I might be longer beguiled by that “ sweet companie,” I receded hastily, and in unconscious vicinity with the Old Man too long lost sight of in these pages, who had been standing behind me, I came into a collision with him so violent and unexpected, that for a moment I was a painful witness of a critical experiment on the laws of gravitation.

Of course I was instantly earnest in apology, which was not, he benignantly assured me, needed. There are symbols out of Masonry which attest fraternity of feeling, and a disposition towards attachment was suddenly and reciprocally developed by us two. The passion of Celia and Oliver, who “ no sooner looked than they loved,”* was not quicklier conceived than our friendship. He had heard my quotation from the Scottish bard, (which I had vented audibly, believing myself alone,) and though tolerably well-stricken in years, he appeared to appreciate the ecstatic pride

* As You Like it.

of life to which the poet has supplied a language. We conversed awhile and parted, for recollections of waiting clients gat hold upon me: but we exchanged addresses; and when—in reply to his earnest solicitation that I would visit him soon, *very* soon, I promised on the evening of the second day to call on him at Ivy Lodge, it was with a strong confidence that I should find it a “haven where I would be.”

COLLOQUY I.

THE OLD ENTHUSIAST'S SHELL, WITH A SAMPLE OF ITS
ECHOES.

COLLOQUY

CHAPTER II.

"Whate'er you see, whate'er you feel, display
The Realm you sought for."—PARNELL.

THE habitation of the individual with whom I had thus become acquainted, and for whom I was sensible of a sudden and singular interest, was situate in one of the pleasantest environs of London. The day was in a deep decline at the period of my presentment, but yielded still abundant light about the Lodge to display the neatness of its external aspect, which, as well as the arrangement of a limited parterre, bespoke its owner's sense of chasteness and propriety. The house was in its character more rural than, in that neighbourhood, suburban dwellings are in general; and whilst its size and situation might have adapted

it for the retreat of a merchant, the absence of certain features pleasant to the eyes of a *commerçant*, convinced you that it was not the harbour of a merchant-man, or that if it was, its appearance guaranteed his good taste and true gentility. [I protest, *en passant*, against any illiberal deduction from this remark, which merely implicates *gott*, not worth:—I rejoice over several clients in the commercial interest—all honorable men, very.] The entrance-gate opened by a peculiar catch, and formed part of a wooden fencing of lattice-work, which, being high and over-run with ivy, concealed from pedestrian passers-by the lower rooms of the Lodge. The house also was nearly covered with the same vagrant root, displaying two distinct hues—that which grew upon the projections of the building being of a deeper green than that which overspread its recesses. A few vases and rustic flower-stands were dispersed in judicious display, and were garlanded with the snowdrop and primrose. And opposite the housedoor, and commanding obliquely the outer gate, a roomy kennel (also over-run with ivy) was established, from which there partially protruded the caput of a mastiff, “life-like and awful to view,” though merely carved and colored (as you discovered on a closer and keener

scrutiny), and representing the sentinel as keeping a vigilant eye upon the wicket, although in couchant attitude.

The public thoroughfare to which the domicile was contiguous, was not the most-frequented route to the metropolis, though sufficiently peopled; yet, from the height and density of the fence that bounded it, the gate was no sooner closed on the inside, than you seemed in a realm sacred to Silence—in a sanctuary upon whose stillness there intruded only the fitful note of some drowsy wood-warbler, nestling down for the night,—very languidly carolled, but not on that account the less heart-soothing,

“ as it sank

On the lull'd ear, its melody that drank.”

And many a weary wing had its quiet resting-place there—not more secure in leafy solitudes than in the depths of that redundant ivy and the guardianship of the kind heart it sheltered. The stillness that reigned without the Lodge presided more intensely within—a realisation of Peace made palpable—Quietness (like Darkness once in Egypt) that might be felt. Windows, some partially and others wholly composed of amber-colored glass, imparted to the interior a dim,

religious light, of that chastened hue, neither silvery nor golden purely, but a rich commingling of both—such, fair Lady, as your own starry orbs may have witnessed in the west at eventide, ere the Day's lustrous orb had suffused the horizon with the deep crimson radiance which consummates his setting. There is a peculiarly-tranquillising influence in that soft amber light; and perhaps from associating it with the quietude that prevails at sunset, or with the solemn splendour which it sheds over sacred places, we connect it instinctively with serenity. The apartment in which I found the *genius loci*, had an air of luxurious comfort, utterly apart from ostentation; the walls supported the effigies of six generations of his fathers; and though the room was not large, the chief portion of the space left unoccupied by his ancestors was devoted to the accommodation of four capacious bird-cages, "the lodging" (as he observed smilingly, the instant he perceived my eye upon them,) "the lodging of a few parlour-boarders, in addition to a numerous singing-class in the eaves and leaves without.—I feel," he continued, in reply to a remark I made connected with his in-door aviary, "I feel, if not a sacred, an 'home-felt delight,' in the strains of my domestic quire, which, by-the-bye, the last few

days of warmth and sunshine have driven to such excess of riot, as made them almost

‘vex with mirth the drowsy ear of Night:’

but my joy was well-nigh at an end, and my band in danger of being broken-up, by a doctrine of *humanity* taught with the power of poesy by that dear Disturber in the North, the undying CHRISTOPHER of that name, for whom I will not impute to you the barbarism of a want of love and reverence. *He* denominates the singing of caged birds ‘a rueful *simulation* of music;’ and ‘upon this hint I spake,’ though loth, a sentence of emancipation in favor of that unconscious captive roosting on the upper perch there, (still wide awake, *per Hercule!*) my feathered knight, Sir Frederic—to whom esteem yourself as introduced. My servant is infected with his master’s prejudices, and did the part of Liberator as lazily as would a more reputed son of Fame, were his liberating efforts honorary. And indeed my newly-born humanity was nearly convulsed at the bird’s embrace of Liberty, whom I had not heart to hail then as ‘the *merry* mountain-nymph;’ for, independently of the favoritism induced by long companionship, I had gloomy forebodings of a compulsory indolence and disenchanting solitude, if the ‘fytte’

caught from the Recreations of Christopher should have four days' continuance. What matinal employment could I invent, as a substitute for the duty of preparing sustenance for those devourers? That same blithe bigot, Sir Fred, turns sullen and threatens *felo de se* by starvation if any other hand than mine presumes to meddle with his provision; and the Queen Dowager—near my honored grandsire's portrait—even she does despite to a hallowed Name, by signs of unamiable temper, if other than I prepare her royal board. But away—after long pausing and beginning late—away went Sir Frederic on his 'advent'rous flight,' to a shrub five yards distant from his prison-house, whence, after a perplexing reconnoitre, he adjourned to the ivy above the window here. We saw no more of the *knight till morning*, and then he was discovered *en attendant* on the window-ledge, in a frame of feathers

' That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all too ruffled and somewhat impaired.'

A luckless boon was freedom to Sir Fred! The colonists on the outside—an envious Ishmaelitish mobocracy!—did most despitely entreat and persecute the yellow-crested knight. But yet—(you

remember the philosophic chant of the Swan of Avon)—

‘ There is some soul of goodness in things evil;’

and the maladventures of my marred and maimed minstrel over-ruled the ultra-liberalism of the North; enabled me with quiet conscience to retain my household company of melodists; and did assuredly qualify me, by patient watchings and successful healing, for a physician’s diploma in ornithological pharmacy. —Really I am bound to apologise for permitting a mere canary-bird thus early and, perhaps, indecorously to incite me to garrulity. But I have a secret faith that I *may*, with you, assume the freedom of a more prolonged intimacy. Read you ever the Poet-Preacher (Taylor)’s Sermon on the Marriage-Ring?—No!—Then, abstain from it if you would avoid the state of wedlock! ‘ No man,’ says that divine Divine, ‘ can tell, but he that loves his children, how many delicious accents make a man’s heart to dance, in the pretty conversation of those dear pledges. Their childishness, their little angers, their innocence, their imperfections, their necessities, are so many little emanations of joy and comfort to him that delights in their persons and society.’ Now I am a

floating old man, unwedded, and the birds you see around me are some of *my* fondlings—my adopted *children*.”

A tone of voice, soft, and touched with the gentlest trill, (not dissimilar to that which, about nine years ago, distinguished the Bishop of Winchester’s,) and the peculiar visual expression I have mentioned, gave wondrous effect in speech to what may appear tame in transcript. His *eye*!—it was nearly tantamount to another tongue,—the mind’s interpreter by an optical language. And his voice, though not naturally powerful, was capable of inflexions so nice and gifted with intonations so musical, that, together, he spake and looked an expiring subject into vivid life again: and, making every object he alluded to, live in description, there breathed from him, as he pleaded his concern for his feathered family, such ineffable fondness, that in the purity of his affection you admired it the more for its simplicity, and felt the effect of its eloquence to be a new estimation of canaries.

The sanctum in which he was seated, was surrounded with book-shelves, fitted under, and forming an additional support to, his progenitors on the canvas. On one side of the apartment were arranged the works of prose authors, the back of each serving as

a remembrancer of reputation, either time-honored or coteremporary: and the opposite compartment was filled with the works of poets, chiefly British. A volume of the Faery Queene, another of Racine, Chalmers' Tron Church Sermons, and Les Oraisons Funèbres de Bossuet, were lying on the table. We discoursed for a brief space upon current topics, and the circumstance of our rencontre. He told me of his peculiarities of taste and sentiment, "which are not either *peculiarities*, I trust," said he, in summing them up, "since my best hope is in Religion, my warmest aspiration for my fellows' good, and my chief pleasure in Poetry—which is to Nature (which is *all*, save God!) as the handmaid of a lovely regal maiden, who indicates, and calls upon you to admire, the charms of her sovereign mistress."

I availed myself of a momentary cessation to glance at the books before him. "To use a phrase familiar to you," said he, "I have been turning to each of these works for a *refresher*. My memory, which I kept tolerably 'schooled and exercised' in youth, plays the truant 'in mine age, now I am gray-headed;' and, faithful from period to period, has not fidelity which can abide a paragraph. A lady of my acquaintance has made my cottage eloquent to-day with the praises

of Mlle. Rachel: her name recalled the Hermione of Racine's *Andromaque*, whom I heard and saw at the Théâtre Français. The Englishman's World-painter, glorious Will himself, and in his own language, often dwindles into doggerel in attempting to jingle; but the French tragedial rhyme is intolerable. What sympathy *can* one feel for sentiment, that should move with the majesty and ease of a monarch, stalking *on stilts*, and rescued from a monotonous twang only by manifest effort?"

C.—Little, indeed; though the first-class *artistes* avoid with much dexterity the gulf which yawns at the close of each couplet! This difficulty and, to us, defect, displays in full-relief the scarecrow which Milton designates 'the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.'

E.—True. You have seen Rachel then?

C.—I have, but not as Hermione.

E.—She is the reigning *déesse* with our fickle friends, whose fashion it is intensely to idolise, or to dispatch, unaneled, *au diable*. Each line here suggests Poetry *in a palsy*, and occupies nearly as long in reading, as the birth, progression, and decay of an *affaire du cœur*—an *amour éternel* in the Centre of Civilisation. Nevertheless, here *are* lines which

seem to rise from the page with the nerve of a giant refreshed. Where shall we alight upon a scene of conflict more fiery and impetuous than this, where every little word on the tongue of a French girl becomes a stiletto!—

“ Ne vous suffit-il pas que je l’ai condamné?
Que je le hais; enfin, seigneur, que je l’aimai!”

Sorry justification enough for requiring Orestes to add to his character of miserable that of murderer; but Rachel, once seen hurling this passion-poisoned shaft, in fitful vengeance, at her unhappy suitor—he sighing like furnace—can never be forgotten. It is indelible as the recollection of a lightning-flash which in youth may have blasted a human creature on your right-hand, and swept by you scatheless—horrified but unhurt. I have never before recognised so forcibly as now I do, in this reminiscence, the strength of this sentence of Madame de Stael:—
“ Tant d’individus traversent l’existence, sans se douter des passions et de leur force, que souvent le théâtre révèle l’homme à l’homme, et lui inspire une sainte terreur des orages de l’âme.”

C.—An axiom whose base, alas! appears to be un-

* Sur “ La Déclamation.”

settling! But you have, there, French eloquence of another order—a style which, partial as I am to poetry in my proper tongue, claims pre-eminent admiration in the Gallic. What an avalanche of the elements of oratory, what facile flow of language, what graphic delineation, what sonorous *adjective-aid*, what mellifluous cadence, conspire, in presence of a lofty ambassador in things divine, to sink (*pour le moment*) the terrestrial; to make “the merry-hearted sigh;” and to win, from fair aspirants after bliss, the homage of a fervent “*C’était magnifique!*” on their return from the mass to attire for the masquerade!

E.—Ay, the preacher’s end and aim, conviction, is, I fear, a fruit rarely found in profusion; yet, as it regards the *discours*, many an epic poem has been pronounced from a French pulpit. That which Coleridge is reported to have said of Taylor, that he seldom wrote prosaically excepting in rhyme, applies antithetically with equal justice to the more intellectual of the priesthood of France—their sermons are Poetry, dismounted from the stalking-horse on which it paces the stage. Here, for instance, in Bossuet’s *Oraison Funèbre de la Reine de la Grande-Bretagne*, is an exordium of grandeur, worthy to be admired of all men, and to sink into the hearts of princes: “*Celui*

qui règne dans les cieux, et de qui relèvent tous les empires, à qui seul appartient la gloire, la majesté et l'indépendance, est aussi le seul qui se glorifie de faire la loi aux rois, et de leur donner, quand il lui plait, de grandes et de terribles leçons." And this "solemn opening" precedes no "insignificant conclusion;" his theme is at all points arrayed as befits its majesty, and merits Collins's quaternity of epithets—

" Warm, energetic, chaste, sublime."

If an old man's company should induce you often hither, we will scan more intently the legacy of this holy Priest—and of others—of mighty Massillon! Strange sovereignty of a Name, whose sound arouses the soul's feelings from a long and deep repose, suddenly as a tired host might start from slumber at the thrilling note of peril! Memory, at the name of MASSILLON, unrolls a picture wrought in colors weird as the gate of Death—in lines wildly terrible as the vision of Belshazzar's Feast, or, more fearful still, the Deluge, with its multitude—in all the horror of madness but without its unconsciousness—urging their gasping flight from the gorge of the on-rolling, inexorable wave. He portrays, as *present*, the END; and the dense assembly, with its many phases of cha-

racter, are bowed, as might have been one contrite Sodomite of old, conscious of his city's coming doom, and adding *his* importunity to that marvellous human Plea which strove with the Wrath of GOD. But hear the Prédicateur:—" Je suppose que ce soit ici notre dernière heure à tous: que les cieux vont s'ouvrir sur nos têtes; que le temps est passé et que l'éternité commence; que Jésus Christ va paraître pour nous juger selon nos œuvres, et que nous sommes tous ici pour attendre de lui l'arrêt de la vie ou de la mort éternelle! Je vous le demande—frappé de terreur comme vous, ne separant point mon sort du votre, et me mettant dans la même situation où nous devons tous paraître un jour devant Dieu notre Juge;—si Jésus Christ, dis-je, paraissait dès à présent pour faire la terrible séparation des justes et des pécheurs, croyez-vous que le plus grand nombre fût sauvé? Croyez-vous que le nombre des justes fût au moins égal à celui des pécheurs? Croyez-vous que, s'il fesait maintenant la discussion des œuvres du grand nombre qui est dans cette église, il trouvât seulement dix justes parmi nous?—*En trouverât-il un seul?*" They tell us that his words ran like a chilly winter-stream through his hearers' veins; and even when you read them you feel an involuntary shudder, and

almost seem to fluctuate on the brink of that dread abyss, over whose despair etherial Hope for a moment folds her wings. And yet this Massillon, whose every stroke in this picture of awe serves, but suspends, the climax, till the concentration of all imaginable calamity is before you;—this Massillon, who seizes upon and sways the mind like a despot, and urges it through gradations of increasing tumult into a mental Reign of Terror;—this strife-creating Spirit *has* a voice placid as the smile of Peace—a power to dissipate the dark clouds which he has made to lower over a near and drear Futurity; to curtain-up that chasm of Despair whose influence worked like palsy on the wing of Hope; and by vivid colorings of the heritage still accessible to the faithful, to re-invigorate the daunted pinion, till it speeds exultingly and of right to an altitude above the stars. Through the lurid haze of Awe you pass on to the bright heaven of Perfect Love; and see again your lost birthright of beatitude, and *feel* your property in the Infinite.

C.—The forte of French preachers, as far as I have observed, consists mainly in description and in declamation; and the predominancy of the latter may perhaps account for the unsatisfying results of their ministry: the Voice that should penetrate the heart,

too often plays but on the ear as a pleasant cymbal. I shrink from the presumption of giving judgment on the French as a people; but *La Gatté* is their Diana, and they have not resolution to abstract themselves from the worship of the idol, and to sit down in silent solitude, and be thoughtful. How great a contrast to the general style of the French divines is presented by the Scottish Chalmers, who—descriptive in an eminent degree—is irresistible in *argument*.

E.—Perhaps by Southrons the eloquent Scot is better read than heard. But he arrests the proud host of Prejudice, which are apt to rise now in man as they have ever risen since the Great Rebellion in the year of the world 1,—they recede, I say, before this Legate of Truth, like the waves of an ebbing tide. Would you enter the lists of controversy with him, you are sensible of the impotency of a stripling, in the iron grasp of a gladiator. *Demonstration* is the term he chooses for his theological motto, and he has a right to it. Read at your leisure (if it is a sermon yet unread,) this seventh of the Tron Church discourses, and if you discover a loop-hole, admitting the escape of any single character from the responsibility of a searching self-investigation, then I will consider your ingenuity stimulated by aid obnoxiously

superhuman. On the arguments of Chalmers, as on a broad and buoyant tide, Truth stems contending elements triumphantly as did the Ark the inundating waters. Hear an old divine analogising thereupon: "When the waters of the flood came upon the face of the earth, down went stately turrets and towers. In like sort, when the waters of affliction arise, down go the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, in a word, all the vanities of the world. But the ark of the soul riseth as these waters rise, and how too? even nearer and nearer unto heaven."* Those old men speak, do they not? with admirable simplicity, and shape out a moving picture almost in monosyllables. Is the primitive mantle rejected from Dan even unto Beer-sheba?—is the spirit of the fathers' style "interred with their bones?"

C.—Ah! the moan, not unmelodious, of discontent with things present, the sigh for *past* perfections, echoed from the Poet there; not captiously, but with the tone of complaint natural to moralists with whom

"was rapture once what is but memory now."

E.—*Complaint!* and caught from Edmund Spenser! At what infectious spot?

* Disce Mori. Sutton.

C.—From this most “musical and melancholy chime,” it may be—

“So oft as I with state of present time
The image of the antique world compare,
Whenas man’s age was in his freshest prime,
And the first blossom of faire vertue bare—
Such oddes I find ’twixt those, and these which are,
As that, through long continuance of his course,
Meseemes the world is run quite out of square
From the first point of his appointed sourse;
And being once amisse grows daily wourse and wourse.”

E.—Upbraid not the Poet for repining at the ills of eld—for “grief, which is but grandeur in disguise”—for such, and only such degree of discontent with Earth, as stirs him to the lofty enterprise of a New World: a sphere whose lustrous outline the piercing eye of the Poet—by Piety directed—may have traced, obscurely perhaps, but with sufficient distinctness to animate his hope of inheritancy, and sanctify with pure religious fervor his longing for

“that same time when no more change shall be,
But steadfast reste of all things, firmly stayd
Upon the pillars of Eternitie,
Which is contraire to mutabilitie:
For all that moveth doth in change delight,
But thenceforth all shall reste eternallie
With him that is the God of Sabaoth highte.—
O that great Sabaoth God, grant me that sabbath’s sighte!”

C.—Impressive as Luther's Hymn, heard in Westminster Abbey!

E.—Nay, Poetry, of however sublime a birth, can never be so effective alone as when wedded to Music, and then in the celestial alliance Poetry is the weaker vessel. For among *all* the instruments to our delight, there is not one so potent (during its fugitive control) or so *mysterious* as Music. The hind, moulded from the clod and almost as senseless, acknowledges its irresistible *might*, as it undulates on his drowsy ear, rousing, and charming, and holding captive;—while on finer-fibred spirits does it not operate like a breaking-up within the bosom of “the fountains of the great deep!” But its *mystery* is a nobler and an ennobling theme—a theme which is not of the earth, earthy, but which has to do with the imagination, detaching its wing from a low brooding over material things, and urging it to soar into that vast Realm of Anticipation, to which, as the heirs of infinite promise and the creatures of infinite hope, we have hereditary right. And making us to marvel, that if such vivifying influence belongs to the concord of *human* creation, *what* ecstasy shall be ours amid the minstrelsy *divine*—sounding from the harps of angels, in spheres whose secret preparations for his bliss the ear of *man* hath not heard nor *can* hear!

E. was so borne away by the impetuosity of feeling excited by his subject, in which his whole being appeared to be absorbed, that, as he came to a close, his faculty of enunciation was impeded, and he rested his head upon his hand for a minute. The effervescence had worked away during that interval, and he resumed,—his countenance the visible seat of gentle-heartedness, and his voice “soft as the west wind’s sigh.”—

“Though I spake with the tongues of men and angels,” I should fail to depict faithfully the dominion which this celestial Captivator possesses over me. And attributing to it as I do—not the powers of traditional miracle, but yet a mighty power to modify the harshness of humanity, and cause many a tract in the waste wilderness to blossom as the rose,—I pant for the promulgation from high quarters of a well-advised system of instruction. Next to Holy Truth itself, which the Spanish proverb majestically designates as the Daughter of God—

“La verdad es hija de Dios”—

next to Truth, I venerate its shrine—next to the priceless Pearl, I am anxious for the Ark which bears it through the troublous sea of Time: and with the

impression I have of the ameliorating, *spiritualising* influence of an extension of the empire of Music, I would that the solemnly-affianced sons of the Mother of my Faith—the English Church—were energetic in its promotion. Her temples do not yet resound with holy song—the vernacular language of Gratitude, and the temperature of the frigid zone prevails at the gate of heaven. For in praise it is that the mighty power of harmony subserves its *most* majestic purpose:—attuned in homage of Him before whom so many worlds move in order and “give out music as they go,” it is but the reverberation, as it were, of the inaudible but not invisible concord that pervades the universe; the sacrifice of accordant sound to its refulgent Soul and Source!

C.—The poet Wordsworth, referring to the sudden and spreading rise of new churches, describes the time as *conscious of its want*. In regard to the energy, the absence or paralysation of which in our services you bewail, this *consciousness* of a privilege, in many places inadequately appreciated, and in some (excepting in form) passed into desuetude, approves itself to be reviving, and in the symptoms of resuscitation which it exhibits, gives us grateful

“ help, when we would weave
A crown for Hope.”

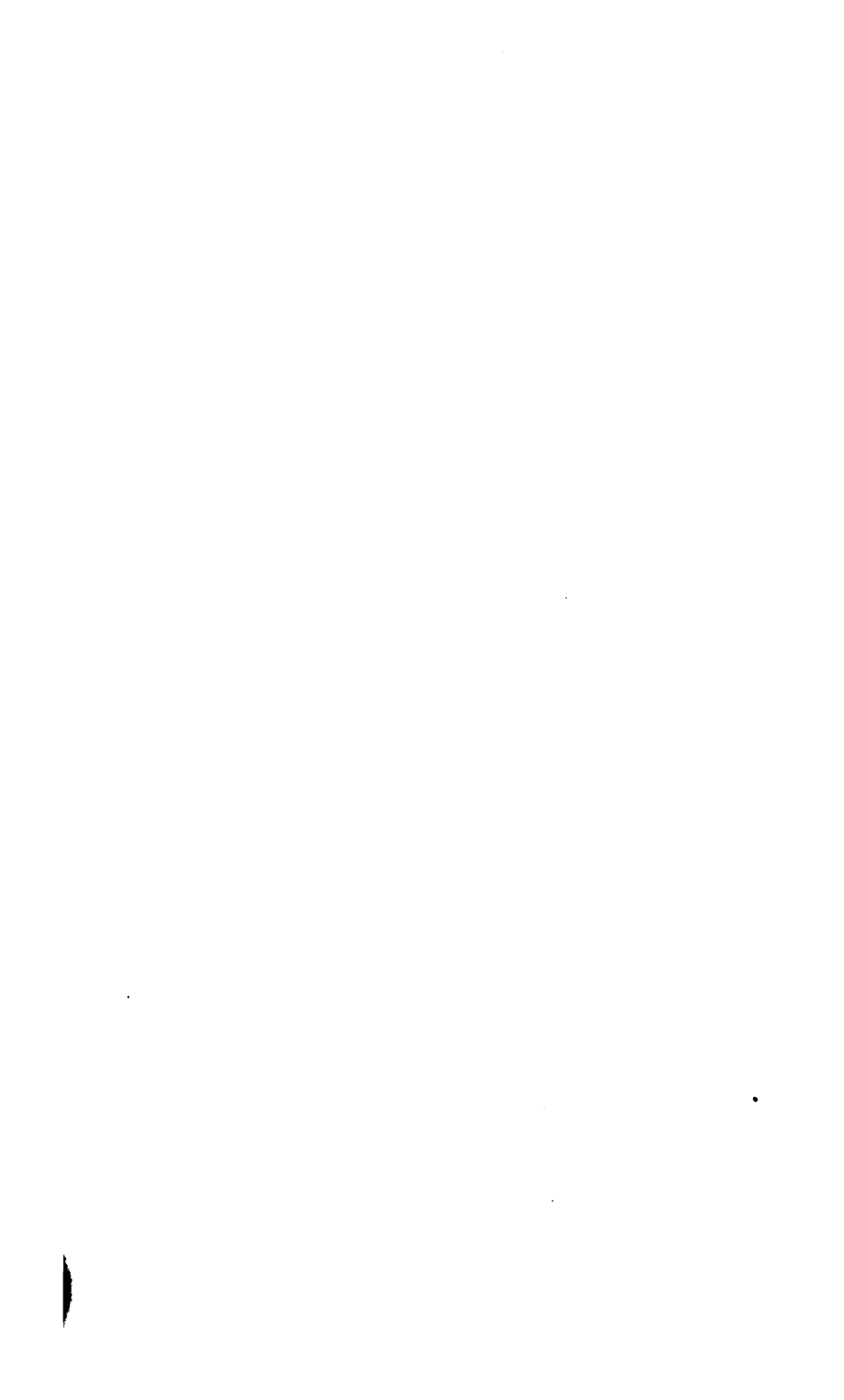
E.—The wedding-chime for an only child could not more sadden me in its first effect or more gladden me in its second, than that past stifling and present unshackling of the spirit of reverential song. And depend on it our Church will experience a mighty strengthening of her sinews in nourishing this breath of song. For her symmetry and fair proportions, “long concealed, concealed and cherished long,” are developing largely now before children capable of the only invulnerable allegiance—an intelligent one. Day by day our Fathers’ Faith has fewer champions on the sole score of its having been the Faith of our Fathers—though *that* challenge hath a magic charm over many hearts;—but daily are augmenting its puissant defenders, whose consciences have weighed its tenets and found them not wanting. And thus the attachment of our time is combining the deep veneration of the soul with the warm affection of the heart.—You have alluded to the “joyful haste” with which ascending spires and the sound of “the church-going bell” are gladdening the land, fertilising its length and breadth. ’Tis the sovereign’s characteristic of the age! The Proposer of Fifty new Churches in a single city, will need no elaborate epitaph to invite the praises of posterity.

The timepiece sounded reprovngly, and I arose to leave, taking a slight liberty with Spenser—

“ Ere long the northerne waggoner will set
His sevenfold teame behind the stedfast starre.”

E.—Ah! Alma Mater has seduced us from the Faery Queene! yet, soft as a melody of love murmuring in the heart's core is the Requiem of Reason, Fancy, Imagination, at thought or sight or sound of Name of GENTLE EDMUND SPENSER!—Name sculptured in memory deeper than in marble, and wreathed with faery flowers, lowly as though warmed into being by the starlight—in keeping with the Poet's predominating traits. You seldom meet with Edmund in a storm, or behold his eye “ in a fine frenzy rolling;” but he conducts you on a calmly-flowing tide, over waters whose little heavings and undulations are lit by moonbeams, to a garden which you know has golden fruit, for now and then you see it; but the greater part of its produce is *netted*—sometimes very thickly netted. And now, if you persist in going, “ *A Dieu!*” in serious significancy. But harkye! never reproach gentle Edmund again, unless for this—and then hushed as a spirit's voice, for he confesses the foible—that “ the whole intention of his conceit is too clowdily énwrapped in allegorical devises.”*

* Letter to Raleigh.



CHAPTER III.

THE ELDER PROFFERS AN OPINION UPON WORDSWORTH.

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“ I cannot mend it, I must needs confess,
And do remain as neuter.”—YORK, *in* RICH. II.

THREE days had elapsed since the interview which closed with the last chapter, and in company with applications for professional “ opinions from all sorts of people,” Rowland Hill’s emissary for the district in which my chambers were situate, deposited therein on the morning of the fourth day, the original of the following :—

“ Ivy Lodge, 9th Ap. 41.

“ Did my parting salutation on Monday night include an ‘ *Au revoir* ? ’—My reminiscent faculties resolved into a committee of inquiry betimes this

morning, and the result is present pyrrhonism. Once for all, prithee cause the 'deep umbrage' of my *locale* to prate of your whereabouts whensoever you will, and consider the old man here as your friend. I seldom remember to invite; make therefore this injunction a standing one, like the whoop of "Hereditary Bondsmen!"

"Your apprehension concerning the expediency of refixing the kalends to suit the disordered state of the months, may soothe itself in contemplating April, true to its ancient reputation of Inconstant, and not unlike a fair form torn by epilepsy. What a fit the poor month suffered on Friday! Would the Meteorological Society accept *my* theory of the frequent sulkiness of Friday?—a crude allegory upon practices in the Commons' House; to wit, that an elemental opposition goes on against the Tory Premier, Sol, on Fridays, and that the fine old fellow is sometimes overpowered for a brief space by an incongruous coalition, lashed into turmoil by a most obstreperous tail.

"But he has recovered the mastery; and if any stormy malcontent, in the guise of a cloud, presumes to rise in his presence, and to cough or expectorate, the gorgeous Minister radiates the splenetic effusion with prismatic colors. The profound in these matters

affirm that we severally sustain an immense pressure of atmospheric air—I forget if it be hundreds-weight or tons per square inch of shoulder.—How is it that no philanthropic senator, casting a lynx-eye on the fardels which affect the masses, has entered his protest against this grievous oppression. Is it not enough to be taxed for *light*!—are we also to be burdened by *air*? Will no indignant son of Erin pray for a ripple of this union, or move, that the Phæton of the cabinet do take a diplomatic drive up to Phœbus, and entreat for terms less onerous.

“ Well, with all this ponderosity without, I can still sing—(alas!

‘ *Omnia Tempus edax carpit—omnia sede movet!*’

Momentarily oblivious of dental deficiencies, I remember that I can only say) *Je suis content!* ’Tis happy for us that these poor barks—our bodies—laden, as sage men at St. Stephen’s assure us, heavier than barges, are constructed on and conceal a buoyant principle! By the throttle (regarded as a channel of song, the marvellous throttle) of Sir Fred! so many things—above, around, beneath—have been to-day in compact alliance with that unreasoning lassie Joy, (espied awhile ago from Rydal, under guidance of a

sunbeam, the lax rover!) that the weather-beaten bark whose anchorage is superscribed, has metaphorically—nathless its heavy freight of wrongs—been dancing like a very skiff on summer-breeze-delighted billows.

“ You may think me here, alone, ivied-in, kinless, kithless, an old man to be pitied. Spare your compassion! Even were all my plumed pets under discussion among worms, I have a petticoated pet who humours and enraptures me—and there is exquisite joy in loving her. I became part-proprietor of the darling at her baptism, nineteen years ago, and have given her more attention than was stipulated in the bond. Dutiful in much, the hussy has her conceits, —‘ gives proof,’ as old John Harrington observes, ‘ of woman’s ways;’ and as to poetry, though she doesn’t dispute openly the supremacy of King Will, her allegiance is undermined by the pathos of Queen Felicia and the charms of divers others of that line of queens.”

A few days afterwards, towards evening, I turned my back upon the smoke and stir of Town, and revisited E. The morning had been marked by the “ uncertain glory” peculiar to the month; but the afternoon was altogether lovely, and the sun set with

unusual splendour. E. was intently watching its parting rays when I entered, and had no sooner pronounced my welcome than he inquired if I had witnessed the transcendent lustre of the sun's decline.

A disquisition rather than a colloquy followed my reply; for, happening to incorporate with it a sentiment of Wordsworth, the old man remarked that he had omitted at our previous interview to ascertain definitively my opinion of this Poet, whose especial lot it was—he went on to observe—neither to be approved or discommended *in moderation*; but who was esteemed by the enthusiastic of one class as an angel of light, and regarded by the inveterate of another class as a “despised and broken idol.”

E. had tacitly and rightly accredited for admiration the frequent loans I had levied on the thoughts and expressions of Wordsworth, and avowed himself also in the foremost rank of the poet's admirers. He expressed the sadness, not unpleasing, with which the contemplation of the departing sun had filled him—a state of feeling aided by solemn reflections suggested by the thoughtful Poet; and alluded to a severe critique upon his works, which he had recently read, indignant with its ill-concealed malevolence; advertising, with no profusion of compliment, to that portion

of the commuunity of critics who are wont to indite an author's *penal settlement* with ink of an uncommonly acidulated quality.

E.—“The grand affair,” says Rousseau, “is, to think *differently*,” and the conception which, in the pomp and circumstance of publication, issues from one mind, is often a signal for the conflict of many; so that the dulcet-strain of the few, fitted by education, judgment, and reflection, to be Rulers and Guides of Opinion, is drowned in the penny-trumpet din of the *canaille*; for as wisdom is proverbially diffident and frequently reserved, so is folly as proverbially dogmatic and as generally loud. It is the deep river that flows in silence—the shallow in commotion: and so of minds; the superficial are contentious—the sterling, composed. It is unchristian to *detest*, but to the hyper-critic the extremity of my dislike verges on detestation; and when I encounter the profound absurdities of such commentators, I ask with Burns (and perhaps with more impatience than beseems the sere leaf)—

“If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?”

Why should my Isle of Palms be made desolate as

a City of the Dead, by the coloring of cynicism or of pragmatic stupidity? Is the living landscape, in which there may perchance be here a stunted tree and there an unseemly hovel—scarcely-seen unsightliness which leaves *the whole* lovely,—are all the fair hues of its glory to be discolored before my gaze, because another, whose happiness is not nourished at the same fount with mine, has looked upon this picture with a jaundiced eye? Such an one may make a survey, if he pleases; but it is not desirable that he should report it—unless, indeed, to cheapen paper for the chandler.

C.—How multitudinous and motley a host have levelled insult, contempt, and coarse abuse, at Wordsworth—his design and its achievement!

E.—Pardon me, the design of Wordsworth is yet far from its achievement. Other poets have left us much to learn, but Wordsworth more than any; and the age will be millennial in its character, which realises the *beau idéal* of this Poet. It might not suit the temper of the present house of commons to create a *poetic episcopacy*, but in the event of such a measure the archbishopric should be named from Rydal Mount; and if I smile at the idea, I say it not irreverently; for the philanthropic aim of Wordsworth has

been to purify the avenues of the cotter's mind, and render it accessible to a new and noble enjoyment;—in few words, to correct the waywardness and wilfulness of humanity by a pleasant “medicine of cherries.”* He who kindles *gratitude* upon the altar of the heart, though he possess not the credentials of a priest, has performed an important part of the priest's office; and if Wordsworth but succeeds in illuming a spot “wildered else and dark,” he sustains the hallowed joy by constant annunciation of

“ the cheerful faith,
That all which we behold is full of BLESSINGS.”

I touch with reverence, profound as Cowper's, the *pulpit*: but in what terms—by what representation—can man be more effectually exhorted, than by this belief, to habitual *thankfulness*?—a feeling which should ascend, like perpetual incense, before that “Parent of good,” who “openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.”

C.—And yet the Propounder of this Poetic Faith above all others salutary, has been above all others of his order, a mark for the violence of “envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness.”

* Sir Philip Sidney.

E.—Provoked, not perhaps so much by the doctrine as by its occasional development. But the lion may be stung by gnats, and the stately vessel be retarded by remoræ. The “mild Apostate from poetic rule” was not, happily, irritated by petty persecution into the scornful silence of misanthropy, and left not the argosy, freighted with the principles of his new faith, to sink, because of the animalculæ that clung to its keel. When Wordsworth arose, to announce his creed and expound its peculiarities, a thousand arrows were launched at his devoted head; among them, but not of them, were canons of fearful fulmination—literary ordnance of heavy caliber—which boomed like a knell of annihilation upon the ear of the period (for each era has its idiosyncratic eye and ear), and to Wordsworth then might have been not inappropriately applied a line from Prior*—

“Lord of his new hypothesis he reigns!”

The Poet, in his hours of weariness and persecution, must, however, have found solace and invigoration in an axiom which he has couched in the beauty and power of truth:

“Every gift of *noble* origin
Is breathed upon by *Heaven’s* perpetual breath:

* Ode on Exodus iii. 14.

and surely the prime lineaments of the Poet's aim bear the stamp of nobility, and approve themselves

“ Majestic in their own simplicity.”

I do not, of course, intend the term “ simplicity” to apply to those indeterminable hypotheses of a previous state of existence, of which Wordsworth is so eloquently credulous. That

“ The soul which rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from afar,”

is a theory which may dominate in the imagination, and glow on the Poet's page, as it does in the Ode* from which I have quoted; but it is conjectural, and must remain so as long as the immortal part of the mysterious compound, *man*, is girdled by mortality.

If I mistake not, it was Seneca who said, that the most miserable object which could be conceived, was an old man who would be young again. I had been young and was old, when first I imbibed with an appetite the spirit of Wordsworth; but I remember well there ran along with my blood as it were, a rivulet of rapture, at the visible embodiment in language, of innumerable phantoms wherewith I had

* Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood.

been haunted; and then, reflecting how comparatively torpid were my sensations to what they would have been in an earlier day,—then, for the first and last time in my life, I felt that I would renew my youth, were its renewal in my power. For the doctrines of this Poet require to be woven with the primary principles of our moral and intellectual being, and to grow with our growth; they are but grafted on the *man*; and the elements of age, although in casual instances ardent and predisposed, cannot retain the plasticity of youth: and indeed, the susceptibility to impression which lends a charm to the spring-time of life, would imply instability and be considered as indiscretion in the man of maturer years. But even now, when the “wild ecstasies” of former days are stilled into sober pleasure, there are no *gradus ad Parnassum* that I tread with a happier or more improved spirit than those shapen by the Poet Wordsworth.

E. paused an instant to respire, and resumed with a livelier air and less soliloquisingly—

Wordsworth is eminently the Oracle of Nature. He has tuned his lyre at various founts, and many of his less legitimate notes are cherished among the “sweet sounds and harmonies” which have their home

in memory; but when he stands by the side of a murmuring stream, in fair field, or flowery dell, intent on the portraiture of unheeded loveliness,—on redeeming the scene in which he stands, like isolated minstrel, from the reputation of a voiceless solitude,—and on quickening in all things a spiritual intelligence; *then* the Poet appears overwhelmed with “a sense sublime,” and his harp-strings seem wrought of the fibres of our very being. He guides the admiring eye over the many-featured face of Nature, with a rod of enchantment, whose property it is to invest with grace and gladness every object to which it points; and there is not a single exiled feature but he rescues it from demerit, and does so endow it with charms, that you are led captive to the confession of a

“glory in the grass and splendor in the flower.”

And, turning from Nature herself, how touchingly does he depict the child, and youth, and man, as swayed unconsciously by the Influence above us and around, to the intelligent observance of which, mankind in thousands are deadened, by *custom* “heavy as frost.” Here is a cast, not from the lineaments but from the characteristics of the *child*:—refer me, in the

entire range of poetic delineation, to a happier illustration of boyhood and girlhood—the natural impetuosity of the one, the sweet timidity and tenderness of the other:—

“ Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the Butterfly,
A very hunter would I rush
Upon the prey—with leaps and springs
I followed on o’er brake and bush,
While she—God love her!—feared to brush
The dust from off its wings !”

Call nothing henceforth *common*;—Wordsworth has power to make a child’s involuntary gesture poetical, and to extract something tangible and *to look at* from an urchin’s sigh.

Then, too, he has a singular art in *sinister* strokes. We are familiar with the apothegm, that “ Vice, to be hated, needs but to be seen;” but you would not for a moment think of imputing flagrancy to a bag-man, because he passed a buttercup without halting to do it homage; yet recite, with ordinarily-becoming emphasis, the following triplet, and Peter Bell the Potter becomes positively an atrocious character, for

regarding a field-flower in no other light than that of a field-flower!—

“ A primrose by a river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more!”

From the beginning, in every age, the heaven-instructed Poet has recognised in the made a shadowing forth of the attributes of the Maker, and, if devout, has caused this discernment of the Deity to redound to His praise. It is the Poet’s function—and how august a function!—to rend from the aspect of Nature the dense veil of indifference thrown over it by habitual unconcerned intercourse, and, in the winning accents of “sweetly-uttered knowledge,”* to rouse the listless creature to wakefulness,—thence on to interested watchfulness of the Creator’s operations; to convince him that the garniture of earth and its star and sun-emblazoned canopy are not unmeaning display—inexpressive adornment—but to the observant eye are all replete with a sublime significance: that the humblest object which can attract his gaze, though seemingly inanimate or inert, is yet an instrument of design in the laboratory of the Lord

* Sidney.

of all. And tracing in all things an impress divine, and accepting as co-infinite with His power the *wisdom* of the Almighty Mechanist, it is an essential part of the Poet's faith that *nothing* has been created vainly, but that each minute object is the component of a stupendous whole, and subserves in its vocation the inscrutable purposes of Omniscience.—And this exalting doctrine has been, I repeat, the Poet's argument from the beginning:—faithful to this great First Article of a Poet's Belief, the muse of Chaucer thus attests his credence in the early lisplings of our mother-tongue:

“Eternalle God that through thy purveyaunce,
Ledist the worlde by certaine governaunce,
In idle, as men saine, ye nothing make.”

Would not the time fail me to recount by name the illustrious succession of Defenders of this Faith? and have they not—each minstrel in his ministry—received a special gift? all, save Two of an unbounded realm—Wanderers by *every* of the thousand rills which flow “from Helicon's harmonious springs.” Yes, to each, in his demonstration of the divinity perceptible in man's daily walk, has been allotted his individual province; and in his own peculiar empire

Wordsworth stands pre-eminent. For him it is not enough that the silent wood be invested with cathedral solemnity and grandeur; he creates a priesthood by the wayside. He will not that our path through the Desert to the Garden be coldly allowed to possess occasional attractiveness; he clears a film from the traveller's eye, and his pilgrimage becomes not pleasurable only, but enchanting. It suffices him not simply to *describe* the earth's glory—he *dissects* it; and beneath the soft enamel of this lowly flower, he will trace its vivid veins and arteries, and will impress you with so acute a sense of its *life*, that thenceforth you feel it would be inhumanity to crush, with careless foot, the “active principle” in form so sensitive and lovely. He will not that you look upon the tree, to admire its outline only, or even that you gather an abstract morality from its foliage, now fair, now withering; he claims for it an eloquence more subtle—he insists that its leaves are *legible*. He represents all things, in heaven above and on the earth beneath, as ministering to man's faith and hope; and would amalgamate all the heart's affections in one predominating *passion* of charity—one grand, absorbing frater-feeling, whose flow of love should be ceaseless as the mercies of God!

When Death shall have lent his consecration to the Name of Wordsworth, and many shall "call him noble" who had been their reproach, *this* cannot but be told emphatically to *his* posthumous praise—that, moved mightily by "*high* objects," it was yet the labor of his best energy to make conspicuous disregarded things, and clothe in loveliness, dishonored. Maintaining ever the ubiquitous existence of that

"Vast chain of being, which from God began,"

it has characterised the world's minstrelsy to laud, with comparative exclusiveness, the Magnificent among created things—the Captivating among the graces and attributes of mankind; to descant on themes whereof he who spake in gifted language might rely on rapt listeners. For bowed by ever so weighty a bondage to Darkness or to Degradation, in humankind unquenchable but with the master-flame of life is an instinctive veneration, for the Great and the Glorious—not invariably, alas! for the Good. Thus in the celebration of objects or qualities which had already a latent fascination for the mind, the Celebrator had no war to wage with prepossessions, by opposition soon roused into passions, nor with antipathies that cling with greater tenacity at provocation. But the

task of Wordsworth was facilitated by few and feeble latent consonancies of sentiment between the Bard and his auditory—inattentive though few. Leaving, in the “vast *chain* of being,” those links of ineffable refulgency or of majestic mould, about which it hardly needed that a Poet should stand to proclaim the *manifest* achievement of a God—he, the far-seeing and laborious, must clear from the corrosion of long neglect, or the injuries of cursory investigation, such dim, obscure links as should, when lucidly developed, display the elaborate handiwork of the Perfect One, and to the earnest eye of adoration disclose new and innumerable evidences of the beauty and harmony of creative skill. Confessedly imposing the enterprise, that clearance of the line of *life* from its Eternal Source, through earth, and sea, and “sunny air,

“To stop—no record hath told where!”

And very pleasant is it to contemplate the *meek* attitude of the Man in his absorbing and patient, noble but long-unapplauded work: *now*, indeed, may they who hallow his genius in their heart of hearts, rejoice in this, *his* exultation, that by a “vision and a faculty divine” he has discerned and given effective prominence to many, many links, aforesaid “remote

from observation,"—parts of that far-reaching chain which extends "through all the worlds;" and by the contagious virtue of a gifted intellect has stimulated the soul's desire to "commune with the glorious Universe," and prepared it for a participation in all ecstatic, and reverential, and ennobling sensations.

If Shakspeare, in a signification comprehending his intuitive familiarity both with *man* and the *scene* in which he moves, has been styled Nature's "darling,"* to Wordsworth (in an especial *scenic* signification,) may be applied the title, by himself suggested, (not to himself appropriated,) of Nature's *foster-child*; and undoubtedly his master-strokes are drawn when clinging closest to the Mother's breast. *Then* in the vast Temple wherein he worships, not a niche but has its property of inspiration;—taught as from beyond its "dome of sky, how beautiful!" *then* through flori-tessellated aisles and the wood's green cloisters

" the rich stream of music winds along,
Deep, majestic, clear, and strong:"

yet, as I just now remarked, the Poet's lyre is sometimes tuned to a key, perhaps less legitimate, though scarcely less euphonious, producing strains which

* Progress of Poesy.

pass at once to the treasury of Music within us, and are numbered with its most welcome augmentations. I have no intention to particularise that prized miscellany; but lest I “talk you *dead*,” or into dormancy, I will refresh you by the recital of a solitary and brief constituent:—on the tympanum of an ear charmed, as is yours, by the Wordsworthian chant, the strain I am about to re-echo has the rousing power of a trumpet on a war-horse; and say, by whom has Indignant Patriotism *more* vernacularly spoken? A high-caste Spaniard, you will remember, is contemplating the overtures made by Napoleon:—

“ We can endure that he should waste our lands,
Despoil our temples, and, by sword and flame,
Return us to the dust from which we came;
Such food a tyrant’s appetite demands:
And we can brook the thought, that by his hands
Spain may be overpowered, and he possess
For his delight, a solemn wilderness
Where all the Brave lie dead. But when of bands
Which he will break for us—he dares to speak,
Of benefits, and of a future day
When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway—
Then the strained heart of fortitude proves weak!
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength to bear.”

It is delightful to recall the beauties of Wordsworth,—to the severe be left the banquet furnished

by his defects. The age is not yet prepared to appreciate the Poet in his fulness; and our hopes for the ultimate universality of his faith, repose, with all our other hopes, in the Future. He has left to his kind a telescope, which does not create, but which discloses the created and existing;—which charms both the eye and the mind; to the one, revealing and expanding forms of beauty;—to the other, unfolding the expressive œconomy of a myriad of things superficially accounted as insensate: acquisitions that, like the forbidden fruit in Eden, but without its penal contingency, are to the eye, pleasant; by the mind, to be desired to make one wise. But the eye—*the eye of the period* requires sublimation; “this muddy vesture of decay” doth yet too grossly close in its visual faculty. Man and Nature, as they appear through the telescope of Wordsworth, assume no ideal grace, no visionary excellence; but discerned by the instructions of Philanthropy, they wear a comeliness which engenders optimism, rendering it, as far as *man* is concerned,

“a joy to think the best
We may of humankind;”

and, in reference to his position in *nature*, enforcing acquiescence in the assertion,

“THY LOT, O MAN! IS GOOD, THY PORTION FAIR.”

Wordsworth has given a certain provocation to censure in having corroborated the testimony borne by all past ages, that indomitable Zeal is frequently heedless of the barriers erected by Opinion and the prevailing Taste; and in having continued the chain of evidence attested by the illustrious of yore, that Energy, when Herculean, is liable to the error of *excess* in its manifestation. One so wise as is he, would renounce the pretension to faultlessness; and who would defend the exemption from fault of either Shakspeare or Milton? Johnson, in *Rasselas*, contends, that imperfections are reasonably to be expected from those “who have much to do;” and Wordsworth, as the Founder of a Faith promulgated in the clamour raised by Prejudice and Jealousy, had assuredly much to do. Yet the dauntless champion has survived to witness his creed become of earnest and increasing acceptance, and the confessions of grateful proselytes deck—gloriously as garlands—the Poet’s retreat. May an old man’s benedictory tribute be permitted to mingle with the heart-thanks which flow to the Seer of Rydal Mount—to WORDSWORTH, of the intellectual creditors of our age, a Chief among ten thousand!

During the delivery of the greater portion of this comment, E.'s manner had been marked by a gravity which contrasted strongly with the vivacity he had displayed at our previous interview. Now and then, at the recurrence of an image moulded in poetic grace, or in recounting the Poet's claims to praise, his eye brightened and his energy revived. His dissertation, void alike of effort reflective or enunciatory, flowed like a tranquil current of articulate thought—its progress stayed for a moment at unfrequent intervals, and again calmly resuming its onward course, as a stream which petty obstacles at times impede, is soon impelled by accumulating waters rearward. As soon as E. had fairly ended, I recalled him to his former self by preparing for departure; and starting at once into jocularità, he said,

“Now if I were of that unenviable temperament which glorious Will has sketched by simply hinting at, that is, were I in danger of ‘creeping into the jaundice by being peevish,’ I’d vent a spleen-simoom at being thus ensnared by your quiescence into that besetting sin of age, prolixity. My plea is that of the disordered Lear, ‘I am an old man; pray you now forget and forgive.’ I protest against the Talmud’s libel on the softer sex, in asserting that of ten measures

of garrulity awarded to our race, the women took *nine*! It does not break my heart, this consciousness of culpability, but it reminds me of the wail of Ithocles, in the Broken Heart of Ford—

“ I now repent it: this now is now too late!”

Shade of the Poet! regard benignly a parody propped upon certitude and uttered in contrition—

Our tongues elongate as our days decline.

“ Before you leave, hear, at least, my request, that you will defer till morning your return in future. Express, if it please you, the astonishment of the *lawyer*, at the absence of ‘cauld-pausing Caution;’ but I ken more of you than you may suppose.—Are you not retained in the case of S— v. Wainwright?”

I had that honor, and acknowledged it.

“ *Eh bien*: the plaintiff and I have been these fourteen years exchanging draughts—he is my wine-merchant—and the good man reposes confidence in me. On the morning in which my corns so narrowly escaped crushing by your retrogressive movement from the bookseller’s window, I was on a mission to the merchant’s; and, while there, his solicitor entered to communicate an opinion of Mr. C. I ascertained the

identity of this Mr. C. with the carnal cataclysm that had nearly overwhelmed me at the bookshop; and when the solicitor retired, S. related the particulars of his suit, as well as certain professional incidents to your personal credit: *inter alia*, the defence——”

I had long been on terms of intimacy with the good-hearted vintner, whom to know was to esteem; and remembering his loquacity, and apprehensive of exaggerated commendation, I felt a slight effeminate tinge getting the better of my professional *sang froid*—a mark of modesty so monstrous, that the old man reined-up abruptly, and exclaimed, astounded,

“Eh, sirs? a blush on the face of a lawyer! I vow, then, the tribe is basely slandered and maligned: the calumny of the Talmud, after this, sinks into a “soft impeachment;” and in dilating upon the qualities essential to the appreciation of Wordsworth, it seems I have *not* been feeling for a pulse in the dead!”

I bore with all the fortitude I could summon, the raillery excited by the display of a constitutional infirmity which I had hardly mastered at that time, but which, fortunately, does not now interfere with the imperturbable *nonchalance* indispensable (or nearly so) to the legal profession, wherein reputation is not a little favored by the preservation of a wintry ex-

terior. Women must have strange tastes or the compassion of angels (*I* attribute it religiously to the last alternative,) to wed with lawyers of first-rate, unco-guird physiognomical advantages (professional), cased, as they appear to be, in a covering of that complexion which seems made of soiled skins,—a hue bloodless, but less like the untrodden snow on Linden, than that in a thoroughfare, which is in process of dissolution and dingy.

Previously to leaving Ivy Lodge on this occasion, I was bent upon obtaining information of the visits there of the *child* mentioned in E.'s letter; and to avoid returning unenlightened, I was constrained to prosecute an indirect examination, which elicited for the maiden the ready Elder's affectionate praises, and for me, sufficient data whereupon to determine my next appearance at the Lodge. E.'s fondness and fervour for his godchild was of that order of love which, according to Scott, has in it "less of earth than heaven;" and the glowing old man's tone was so *thankful* for this treasure of his heart, that, as he indulged in its expression, his feelings deepened and his voice grew tremulous—imparting to his language and his look an effect of indescribable pathos.

“God’s name be blessed!” said E. looking upwards with patriarchal grace, “His mercy be praised for this *one* gift, that having endowed me with the heart *to love*, I am not left in the wide world to mourn in loneliness that unencountered *one*, for whom our Human Nature yearns;—in whose absence, if deeply felt, the craving of Solicitude knows no appeasing, but supplicates the boon, with plaint fathomless as the source of life and holy as the hope of heaven! Of the bosom’s better instincts, the *least* despoiled of its divine simplicity is, methinks, the pure longing to lavish our heart’s wealth upon *a child*; and even where, as here, the strong paternal bond is wanting, the great Father of love doth sometimes implant a principle exotic, whose tendrils intertwine and wreath around their object with such tenacity and tenderness, that stronger I can hardly conceive to originate in man the Parent. Once—lang syne—I might have cherished the hope of closer ties, and did cherish; and e’en now, encompassed by the goodness of an overflowing Hand, this scarce-resigned heart is apt to repine at what the Father willed not; and stirs to re-invest with the irksome mantle of mortality a spirit which—thanks to the Finisher of our Faith—it is my confidence as that I live, is enrolled among that

blissful band from whose faces God hath for ever wiped away all tears. There is a stanza of Campbell that moves deep feelings in me like a heaving flood when I think of it, for in its solemn plaintiveness I hear again that angel's breath, while lingering at the portal of the City whose dwellings have their light and joy from the countenance of the Lamb:

' Clasp me a little longer, on the brink
Of fate, while I can feel thy dear caress;
And when this heart hath ceased to beat, oh! think,
And let it mitigate thy woes' excess,
That thou hast been to me all tenderness,
And Friend to more than human friendship just.
O! by that retrospect of happiness,
And by the hopes of an immortal trust,
God shall assuage thy pangs when I am laid in dust.' "

COLLOQUY II.

TURNING MAINLY UPON HOLY MOTHER.

COLLOQUY II.

CHAPTER IV.

“ And sure there seem of human kind
Some born to shun the solemn strife;
Some for amusive tasks designed
To soothe the certain ills of life,
Grace its lone vales with many a budding rose,
Call forth refreshing shades, and decorate repose.”

SHENSTONE.

THERE were *three* souls in the sanctum at Ivy Lodge on a laughing day in merry May. The Church, by a rather affecting process, quite apart from necromancy, has since resolved those three into two, after an honest and straight-forward fashion, on which one needs not to be over-explicit. I have before hinted at this “catastrophe.” That eulogistic description in detail which it might have been excellent gratification to attempt for E.’s god-daughter, as such, would be

vigour, and are deadlier in their enmity than armed men. These cautious cavils raised by Experience are not agreeable to dwell upon, but they lend no feeble aid to Prudence, in advising the suppression of a premature proclamation of happiness which is *to be*. "The world's a stage" on which the scene sometimes shifts as soon as the poor player has strutted a few paces; and in the scene of a marriage, the merry bridal-peal has often almost subsided into the note of burial;—so brief the intermission between transport and the tomb. To sum up, therefore, I conceive it better becomes the newly-married to be taciturn than babblers about bliss, lest at any time a nuptial dirge should suddenly succeed a nuptial ditty.

The month of May could never have presented a comelier aspect or have diffused a kindlier influence than at the time of which I have spoken. The quire about Ivy Lodge were urging their tiny throats to a dangerous distension; and the Elder's eyes were ready to start from their sockets in a perfect fever of exhilaration.

E.—"Welcome hither, as is the spring to the earth!*" Mr. C. By frantic Fred! (Mary, is that bird inebriated?) by Sir Fred! we are to-day most highly

* Winter's Tale, 5, i.

favor'd. My daughter-in-baptism, Sir;—Mary, this is Mr. C., who promises to surpass thee as a patient listener, child:—nay, no incredulous smile; 'tis honest verity, I vow. We practice here, Sir, no “fashion or ceremony—the appurtenance of welcome,” as Hamlet hath it; and had “the old sexton, Time,” ply'd his pickaxe less ruthlessly *parmi les dents*, I'd sing you a strain of welcome, shrill as Sir Fred's. Seriously, Madam, is our parlour becoming a republic?—these yellow villains take unbounded licence when the Lodge is under female government, and I may as well go whistle to the wind as call the rioters to order.—Have done, ye chartists! Prithee fetch wool, good Mary, wool, for the ears of Mr. C.—I have cause to be concerned for a faculty of hearing so long-suffering!”

There be some that say, Who will show us any good? Of course on the ears of such the Priest's and the Poet's representations fall alike heavily, and either do not reach the heart or awaken in it no willing response. For the health's sake of the mass, such disaffectedness before heaven and before man should be treated as of old was leprosy—the victim isolated from the herd, and left in solitude to inspire the

malaria of his own breath. Priests have their note of terror to sound and re-sound; but ere its echoes cease to vibrate on the awed ear of Conscience, the strain swells into triumph, and lifts the creature, just now depressed, from the tombs of Palmyra to the top of Pisgah—from the survey of ruins to the recognition of a present large fruition and to the sublime expectancies of Hope. “The priestly Guide for me,” says mine ancient friend, “is him who leads, not drives; and who, as we travel onwards through the valley of the shadow, has a smile for its sweet-scented flowers, and takes comfort in them as types of a richer produce. Still the *pastoral* guide must check the admiration that would suggest a folding of the hands to slumber and the impulse to seek a long repose there; for the valley has its

“sunken glens, whose sunless shrubs *must* weep,”

and down from the steep hills will, at some hour, sternly sweep the Storm on the unwary who *would* insist on patient rest despite the warnings of the wise. But the *poet*-teacher is under no grave coercion to reiterate the solemn cry, “All flesh is grass and the glory thereof as the flower:” to him, whose mission leads him out among God’s works that he may report

their language, there is a delectable compulsion to be cheerful—ay, and if the charms of the progeny he adopts excite more praiseful pride than reverend oracles consider orthodox, let such heterodoxy be castigated by the Clergy: though the priesthood hath in it many favorers—in our own list of friends, *one* eloquent supporter of the heresy, who—forgive him, Gracious Queen! and be lenient, my Lord Bishop of London!—has, in this ivied cell, drawn comparisons between the attire worn in palaces and the petals of a pale lily, at which, though derogatory to royal robes, the lovely Mistress of the royal wardrobe could not for her life have frowned. The old Clerk, may it not displease your Majesty, is heartwhole in his loyalty—his offering of our Mother's Petitions for the Queen attest *that*,—and an Illustrious Precedent, my Lord Bishop, will reconcile you to a faithful Shepherd, whose anxious eye but seldom wanders from his fold, and who distils a wondrous medicinal property from simple flowers seen in bypaths and in the fields wherein his lambs have their pasturage.”

Really this digression originally proposed, and now re-proposes, but one brief moment's “aside” from the Elder in his mirth, to ejaculate, as travellers are wont to do at sudden introductions to sweet landscapes on

the highroad, "A pleasant prospect!" or "A charming scene!" Who will show us any good, indeed! Why on the right reverend finding of Bishop Hall *eleven* excellent things have been discovered and triumphantly proclaimed, one of which has reference to "a cheerful companion without vanity;"—*par excellence*, I take it, a religious old man mirthful. Why the bishop halted in his inventory on the deficient side of a dozen, and yet left out of his catalogue *the talk of very young children*, is a circumstance which the editor of the next edition of his *Life* will oblige us by explaining. Bishop Taylor would never have omitted that item in *his* list of good and pleasant things. That admirable priest alludes specially to the allegro movements of a father's heart in the hearing of such "pretty conversation:" let the man remodel himself without delay to whom such conversation proves no pleasure. Of sublunary joys, second perhaps to that which "stands alone, like Adam's recollection of the Fall," is the racy dialect of one's firstborn in its early efforts at elocution. So, at a subsequent stage, pregnant with pleasure is the wild shout of careless childhood—the glad eye kindling at the call to revelry. Nor, when tempered by an instructed mind, less pleasant is it to witness glee in a guileless old

age;—a comfortable sign it is of enduring verdure about the venerable tree against which Time has upheaved his iron arm indestructively;—a cheering testimony that the advances of Decay and approximation of the Grave have brought no gloomy Winter to the soul; a welcome earnest rather, to the hoary traveller, of the calm of a protracted Autumn, submerging at last into the glories of an eternal Spring.

E.—If Regret could possibly to-day find entrance into Ivy Lodge, her only plea were this—that you came not earlier, and have thus lost intercourse with a revered friend of mine, the Rector of a neighbouring parish. Mr. F. is, like myself, a sexagenarian; and my views on church polity and construction of doctrine coincide with his in every particular. Have you ever met with persons with whom you felt a pleasure—an active pleasure in differing; and others, with whom to disagree was to maintain integrity at the expense of real regret? Mr. F. is, in my circle of acquaintance, of this latter class; a man of so much worth and sound judgment that it would be grief to me to differ from him. Then we are both thorough sticklers for the excellency of Holy Mother; but though her reverend son and servant will not bate one jot to her

adversaries, he maintains the meekness of the Christian champion; and while, as from a superior eminence, he looks down upon "the errors and wanderings, the mists and tempests in the vale below, his prospect is chiefly with pity, not with contemptuous pride." 'Tis verily music to the mind to hear that eloquent old man recounting the virtues and superiorities of our Mother—for we both designate our Church by that fond appellative. If the liberty of Truth were again subjected to the shackle, F. is one of the many who possess, and would prove, the constancy and courage of a martyr. The excellent man comes here occasionally, but only too rarely, and we congratulate each other upon the growing influence and cheering prospects of the Establishment; and when he tarries leisurely, and Mary is not here to suffer penance by speechlessness, we indulge in chess—at which (in modesty 'tis spoken,) the layman is rather more *au fait* than his spiritual teacher.

C.—*Apropos* of chess: I was amused the other day in reading extracts from an ancient and curious book, entitled "The Game and Playe of the Chesse, translated out of the French, and imprinted by William Caxton. Fynysshed the last day of Marche, the yer of our Lord God a thousand foure hondred lxxiiij."

The book is considered, upon high authority, to have been the first work printed in England; and in it the translator assumes for the game of chess a high moral ground: he dedicates his book to the Duke of Clarence, to whom he sends "peas, healthe, joye, and victorie; not presumyng to correcte or empoigne ony thyng agens his noblesse, but to thentent that other of what estate and egrese they stand in, may see in this said lityll booke, that they governed themself as they ought to doo." He dates the origin of the game to the time of Emsmerodach, king of Babylon, "a jolly man, without justice," and a parricide; and states as "the first cause wherefore it was founded,—to correct and reprove the king." He quotes the "holy doctour saynt Paule," where the apostle says that "alle that is wrytten is wrytten unto lerning;" and he intends, though he travels to a little distance in expressing it, that his "lityll and symple booke" should lessen "the nombre of foles, which, saith Salamon, is infenye." And in a second edition of his book, he asserts, "that the kyng, that tofore tyme had been vycious, and disordynate in his lyuyng, was made just and vertuous, debonayr, and ful of vertues unto all peple. And a man that lyuyth in thys world without vertues lyueth not as a man, but as a beste. Thenne, late every

man, of what condycion he be that redyth or herith this litel book redde, take thereby ensauple to amend hym." And for as many as read it leniently, he "shal pray, that God, of his grete mercy, shall reward them in his euerlastyng blisse in heuen, to the whiche he brynge us that wyth his precious blood redemed us. Amen."

E.—The pious perorations of the olden time would now be deemed "preposterous conclusions." Such a termination to a modern treatise on chess, would be as unexpected, as the recent benediction of a preacher, who, after enumerating the merits of an exemplary spinster deceased, and representing her to the special imitation of the single sisterhood, ending by observing to them—"Thus she lived, and thus she died, a blameless *old maid*—*which that you may all do, may God of his infinite goodness grant.*"

You expressed, some time ago, the interest which conjecture upon the *mystery* of music possessed for you. Very various are the tastes of men. One of my most estimable friends—a man of fine feeling, whose memory is a kind of poetic jewel-house—has assured me, that he should be disappointed to find the influence of music, under any development, a primary ingredient in the joys of heaven. He and the Rector

are at antipodes in this opinion; and I once heard the pastor persuade his people to value the unheeded privilege of assimilating their worship to the adoration of the angels, in terms which I cannot forget, and with impressiveness I cannot imitate. Thus spake, emphatically, the zealous priest:—

“It is the peculiar province of Sacred Music to liberate the immortal mind from the thralldom of earthly thoughts, and on the wings of holy harmony the soul uprises towards heaven. In sacrificial song it is that the homage of the sinner and the seraph correspond in character, however dissimilar in degree; and, when sincere, it is a religious rapture of the supremest order of delight. It gives birth to an indescribable joy—but Piety is reconciled in it, and the majesty of the Most High propitiated, for it is that pure joy which accompanies ever the kindling emotions of Gratitude.” F. paused for a moment, as in thought “too deep for words upon their stream to bear;” and you heard your bosom in its beatings, so profound was the silence of the sanctuary. “O!” resumed the priest, “O lamentable unconsciousness of its overwhelming debt to the Power which might have hurled us into the abyss of torment, but for that mysteriously-prevailing Love which would allure us

to the realms of bliss!—deplorable insensibility to Mercy, or alarming indifference to its manifestations, is that of the heart torpid and voiceless in presence of Him in whom it lives, and moves, and has its being. How marvellous the contradiction and the coldness too often visible in the demeanour of Christians, congregated ostensibly for united praise! Say, if this be in very truth *our* purpose, would it not be rational to study the example, and strive to emulate the fervour, of beings who worship in a loftier sphere?—there is not a reasonable soul in this assembly but responds affirmatively; but, alas! of this assenting throng, how few are there who do not reproach themselves in the acknowledgment. What! confess that the celestial example is worthy of all emulation, and yet abide in this unbroken lethargy! Is the altar of Gratitude within you so ice-bound, that incessant bounties from on high cannot excite there the audible accents of a thanksgiving song? Yet, as many of ye say in words, and all, I trust, in spirit, ‘it is meet and right, and our bounden duty, to magnify the Lord God of sabaoth:’—avowing this, quit ye like men.—Think ye, my brethren, that sombre Silence hath part or place in the bright land to which we hasten?—ah, which of you would accredit me if I

said, that in the clime whose very atmosphere is harmonical there lived *one* songless spirit—that among all its countless myriad of minstrels there *could* exist one sullen lyre?

“ Sacred Music irradiates the mysteries of Faith,—with the glow of imagination gives vividness to the gorgeous creations of Hope,—and induces a sense of exaltation wherein

• We feel that we are greater than we know:”

thus, its influence subjugates the grosser qualities of the heart; expands its nobler capacities; familiarises its conceptions with whatsoever things are pure; advances the mortal to the dignity of a ministering spirit; and accelerates the progress of the mind towards that eminent altitude of perfection which, while within its earthy confines, the soul has not freedom to attain. The assurance of a vast beatitude, too illimitable, exhaustless, and exquisite for the comprehension of man in his degeneracy, is the revealed distinction between the supreme enjoyments of heaven and the subordinate pleasures permitted to the upright of the world; but the grateful power of harmony on the complicated fabric of natural feeling, would encourage in us the expectation that the large bounty

of enthroned Benevolence has mingled the raptures of choral consummation with the guerdon in reserve for His redeemed ones. ‘The ransomed of the Lord shall return *with singing* unto Zion;’ and not alone are the felicities which there await them affirmed to be indistinguishable to human eye and inconceivable by human heart; it is likewise pronounced concerning them, that the *ear* of man hath not heard the rich reward which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

“The dynasty of depravity in the constitution of man has, in truth, despoiled the purity of those glorifying strains vernacular to the stainless soul; and anthems ascending with simultaneous charm from the high estate of primal innocence to the sphere of the excellent glory, have been exchanged by its dominion for dissonant and broken music. Yet—though sin and sorrow have *subdued* the tone of man’s rejoicing—the victory over Death, the purification from defilement, redemption, unmerited providence, the wiping away of tears, and the eternal joy, are themes which remain to our fallen race; and invited to a reconciled Father, his rescued children may well forget their fleeting infirmities in the interminable perspective of peace—their light afflictions

in the glad heritancy of a weight of glory, and still delight to come before his presence with a song!"

This, continued E., is all that Mary and I could bring away, for closet-consideration; but the effect of F.'s discourse, aided, as I have remarked, by an extraordinarily-impressive delivery, was highly gratifying; and when you attend his church, you will not fail to remark there the "meek fervour of devotion," which Wordsworth laments as a characteristic of ancient piety, defective in the modern: nor will you wonder that the multitude should be all absorbed in the moving eloquence of the Church's petitions, when you hear them, in all their sacred force and comprehensive meaning, from the lips of this pious man, who, imputing to form and ceremony no availing influence *per se*, does not therefore disdain to demand veneration for antiquity, and cement attachment by representations and persuasions, which the schismatic rather than devout might pronounce to be conducive to a *superstitious* regard, but which, by more ingenuous disciples, are found to promote an ardency of affection for the *form*, which aids rather than supersedes the *spirit* of a reasonable worship. The signs of the times induce an apprehension, that the bosom of the

Church will be agitated ere long by ultra-advocates of two classes—the one insisting too pertinaciously on precision in ritual ceremonies; the other, displaying a lax observance, amounting, in the indiscreet, to disrespect and contumely, exceedingly to be deprecated. The tenets of F. are, I conceive the *juste milieu*; and the calm authority of opinions such as his, will maintain our holy Mother's equilibrium, until her querulous children shall "cease from troubling." Many there are who prophecy "Woe! woe!" some in timid alarm—in envious gratulation others—at the prospective issue of these dissensions; and an old friend—a kind of brother in my youth, alack! a weary distance to look back upon—would have made me melancholy a few days ago, if gloomy predictions from a venerable prophet could have prevailed over anticipations more sanguine. I wish you to understand the complexion of that *virtue* which F. attributes to the extraneous circumstance of antiquity and of hereditary sonship. He would urge his flock to scrutinise the *intrinsic* strength and moral grandeur of the Ark of our Faith—to mark *well* her bulwarks; and is content that by her own merits she stand or fall. You shall not—wafted in a tiny boat, on sunny ripples in Spring, around a noble bark motionless as a structure built

up in stateliness and beauty through the pellucid sea—I say you shall not in a petit shallop contemplate the Flower of your country's fleet with a more complacent assurance of security and overpowering sense of majesty, than when on the current of that Charmer's oratory you "go round about and tell the towers" of Christian-England's Ark. Then, after demonstrating her superior construction to that of the surrounding small-craft, and convincing you of her surpassing *sailing qualities* by reference to many a remembered contest and truthful record—then will he press her upon our affections by energetic arguments *ab extrâ*.—"Our *fathers*," says he, "*our* FATHERS reared this Ark, despite of terrors—*never* be their holy heroism forgotten!—and having launched it on the tide of Time, they committed themselves to its guardianship; and generations have since been borne in it to the haven where they would be. And in *our* voyage, shall *we* hesitate to embark in that imperishable vessel which has survived the wreck of ages and which *shall* survive? 'From the cradle to the grave we are on the stormy sea;' but may we not well exult, that in trusting the treasure we carry with us to the keeping of the Ancient Mariner, we are able to *confide* in our Pilot? And shall we, then,

look indifferently on, while the foes of the ship we sail in are attempting to *dismast* the stately fabric which *they cannot overwhelm?* ”

C.—You make me anxious to hear your clerical friend: his sentiments appear to be in strict accordance with what I recognise as the theory of legitimate churchmanship—the love of our Church primarily as the uncompromising Expositress of Truth; secondarily, because bequeathed to us—like the inestimable Hope of Glory—at the price of anguish and of blood. The wise man preserves with solicitude the costly purchase of a prudent ancestor; and the unlettered poor regard, with religious carefulness, the heir-looms of sires who sleep. The Protestant Church descends to us as a legacy which inherent worth enriches and historic associations sanctify; and Montgomery, in extolling the past chivalrous patriotism of Britons, expresses our estimation of the valiant who reared and defended the nation’s best bulwark:—

“ Their deeds of old renown inspire
Our bosoms with our fathers’ fire;
A proud inheritance we claim
In all their sufferings, all their fame.”

And now our Church resembles, morally, a luminary in whose radiations are cheering and all-hallowing

influences—influences which can hardly altogether expire while the elements of our present nature constitute man. For, amid the incessant tumult of sectarianism, enlightened by that *calm* beam which the experienced Instructors and judicious Senators of our age are concerned in shedding upon the intellect of the people—the flickering meteor-light of mere secular intelligence tranquillised and gently coerced by the salutary companion-ray of Religion—enlightened thus, unperturbed by sophistry, unmoved by scorn, the heart which values a *stedfast* anchor for its faith will render its ready tribute of admiration to the fortitude that wrought it; and with the reverence which from a child he is taught to yield to Wisdom, will the Man blend the veneration he instinctively owns to Antiquity. To me it is joyful to perceive, on all sides, a simultaneous endeavour in the clergy to rivet the links which attach the English Churchman to the ancestral altar, by appealing to feelings

“ Essential and eternal in the heart;”

an earnest striving to quicken *a soul* in the cold habit of modern conformity; to strengthen present decrepitude by illustrations of primitive vigour; to fetter us by the permitted rumination—not the unlicensed

vagaries—of Fancy, as well as by the stirring representations of Reality; and, by poetic pictures of past attachment,

“ Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the *shrine*
Becomes religion, and the heart runs o’er
With silent worship. * * *The dead still rule*
Our spirits from their urns.”

E.—If *that* be the character of your churchmanship Mr. F. is your priestly champion; and in the Ecclesiastical Armoury of Wordsworth might you have found a cartel, in terms entrancing as the strains of Momus’ Mother and the Syrens:

“ More sweet than odours caught by him who sails
Near spicy shores of Araby the blest,
A thousand times more exquisitely sweet
The freight of holy feeling which we meet;
In thoughtful moments wafted by the gales
From fields where good men walk, or bowers wherein they rest.”

But I am guilty of a kindred superstition. I remember part of an *ex cathedrâ* exhortation to fidelity to holy Mother, made by F. during the Voluntary-system struggle, and delivered from the pulpit because “ he believed it due from him to warn his people against the craft and malice of designing men, and could not

hope for the opportunity of doing so from another place." I might justly say of F. that

"Surely never did there live on earth
A man of kindlier nature;"

and it is not in the power of ordinary provocations to

"stir the constant mood of his calm thoughts,
Or put them into misbecoming plight;"

but of the pressure of three-score years the priest seems utterly unconscious when his feelings are quickly touched; and at that period of hubbub about religious equality, the honest man waxed warmer with indignation than I had or have ever seen him: for he is well read in man; and the rancorous enmity which bound in brief and ineffective alliance an incongruous phalanx, using Conscience for its watchword, and trampling upon Consistency, excited his animadversion and disgust. So it was in no "well-bred whisper" that he reminded his parishioners of their privileges and line of duty. After manifesting the injustice which the conscientiously-inspired were panting to promote, he adverted to the sleepless spirit of antagonism to the Establishment, and said,

"It becomes your duty, Men and Brethren, to

emulate the adversaries' activity, deprived of its acerbity. Our Church is calumniated to the very corners of the land by a host of vindictive assailants, whose familiar theme is the vituperation of the established order of things, and who, in the face of their system's poverty and nakedness, avouch vociferously that it is "rich, and increased with goods, and hath need of nothing." And now are we summoned to preserve from the fierce desecration of the profane and the envious intermeddling of the equivocally-pious, the Casket of Christian Truth, the consecrated Repository of our Religion, the Ark of that New Covenant whose light was to lighten the Gentiles, and which, preserved intact in this our favored isle, shall one day be declared the glory of God's Israel;—the Landmark for our souls' guidance, the setting-up of which was so sacred an enterprise with our fathers, that the soil in which this landmark was enfixed may almost be said to have been soddened by the warm gushings of their life-blood. And the Virgin Daughter which they alienated from a Mother whom corrupt men had sullied, has, in process of time, herself acquired the sanctity of maternity; and in this present day, amid renewed but most wanton efforts to defame, dismantle, and dishonor her, are *we* appealed to as *sons*, to whom a

consciousness of filial responsibility and a sentiment of filial affection are not considered foreign. That nursing Mother to whose arms we were carried for her baptismal benediction, and who will receive us again to her bosom when we rest from our labors, demands of us, Is a Parent's defence in a gainsaying age *no* part of the duty of her children? Guarding us from the awful peril of Infidelity, from the difficulties and bewilderments of Dissent, from the solitariness of Schism, from the slavery of Superstition, and, by the pure light of Truth, guiding our feet into the way of Peace, is there *no* emotion of gratitude in our hearts, prompting us to rally round her standard, and vigorously contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints? Martyrs—a noble army, to whom life was less dear than her integrity—call us to the contest. That great Head of the Church, whose earthly prayer it was, and whose heavenly will it is, that His may be *one* in Him, even as He is one with the Father, He too summons us to defend, as a quality inviolate, the unity of His church on earth. Breathing the very prayers of saints in successive generations gathered into rest—by solemn commemorative fast and festival tracing *their* footsteps in the pathways of the Holy One—and thus connecting ourselves with the long

line of the faithful, is it *our* lethargy that shall conspire to surrender the Church to the will of her enemies, who, dead to the bleeding sorrow wherewith Piety contemplates sacrilege, would *glory* and not grieve 'to see her in the dust;'—enemies, too, puny in *consistent* ranks, but strengthened now for a fleeting hour by most unprincipled confederacy: and it is ours to behold and *to repel* this onset of the Voluntary System, which, like a huge battering-ram, is levelled at the Fortress of our Faith, from the Babel of belief, by a motley army, in the concentrated violence of a thousand conflicting animosities!"

C.—Tempora mutantur! Such a change has come o'er the spirit of the nation's dream, that the present prostration of the antagonistic party seems irreconcilable with the late vaunt of invincibility; and in the lull of the affray we look about us for the groupes who were rushing with loud invocations to the idol, Religious Liberty—a guardian genius if her placid lineaments be regarded with reverential eyes, but at that time by turbulent zealots followed, sought, and sued, as

"A reeling goddess with a zoneless waist."

Like the Indian at his early home, inquiring for the

friends of his youth, we ask after the sectarian chiefs, "Where are they? and Echo answers, *Where?*"

E.—Woe betide this bonny isle of Britain and her manifold dependencies if words had oftener been deeds!* There were many, however, in that alliance, in whom the *furor* of hostility blinded their better judgment; for, in a moral war, which that essentially should have been, they had not else rejected *Principle*, which is moral strength, in favor of *Union*, which is physical.—But the veriest tyro in physics who ever unwittingly poisoned, or in metaphysics who ever floundered in a mental morass, would agree in this, that in a raging fever it is not from the victim we must expect a timely application of his febrifuge. I have no sympathy whatever with sectarianism; and the sects which too continually subdivide Christendom at the impulse of graceless ambition or pragmatistical whim—by every subdivision rending that mantle which should be seamless and entire—these mushroom corps attest in how little fearful regard is held the sin of schism. Still, I think that many dissenters of the Equality-epoch went not voluntarily into the rough arms of Republicanism, nor courted with a consenting mind the traitor-kiss of Rome; rather, that in yielding

* "Words are no deeds."—*Hen. viii. Shakspeare.*

themselves as coadjutors nominally, but, virtually, as instruments of the Demagogue and the Devotee, they could not discern with how despicable a political and objectionable a religious company of freebooters they were hail-fellows, badly met. If they *did* recognise their true position, we may conclude that the near prospect of a large concession, made compulsory by numbers, was too tempting to retreat from at the recommendation of Rectitude or the counter mandates of pious seceders, deceased or living. To the name of Irons it is pleasant to pay respectful tribute: but when I think of that *general* hapless wallowing in defilement, and that Puritanism, blind-folded and urged on by the designing, should have thus wantonly immersed itself in pitch and pollution, I feel (as gentle Edmund felt for beauty in tribulation,) that "all for pity I could die." The professedly-religious began the contest with the elements of moral warfare, —with argument, and plea, and the protestations of Conscience (grown pitiably sore and petulant, by the way!); but evil communications corrupt, you know; and after the exhaustion of their argumentative ammunition, which flashed and did no more, they resorted to expedients which, if severely scanned, must be remembered with scorn; but, regarded with com-

passion, suggest merely a comparison with the little angers of wayward urchins, who, annoyed by a robust youth, and vexed with the feeling of inferiority, will wreak their harmless ire in hasty verbiage, and hurl promiscuous missiles at him they cannot reach.

C.—“ Yonder harlot, throned on the seven hills,” must have “ coined her cheek to smiles” at the co-operation of the children of the conventicle, some of whose more fastidious fathers repudiated and rejected the reformed Church, because of an alleged remaining taint of Popery. Rome could not but have waxed complacent at the evidence of docility where, of yore, was loud and deep defiance. I firmly believe that a strong (if not the strongest) general check experienced by the movers of that sectarian sedition was the result of a conviction pressed upon the public mind, that the continued strife for equalisation would ultimately tend to promote the designs of never-dormant Rome. The doctrine of *égalité*—either civil or religious—is known by Englishmen to involve an absurd constitutional anomaly; and though our countrymen are “ liable to have their understandings played upon by unmeaning terms,”* yet, once convinced of error or

* Paley.

fatuity, they are much too sensible to persevere in the “ strenuous idleness” of a chase after chimeras. To those who looked forward—who saw events in their causes and could ascertain contingencies*—the issue of a successful league against the Establishment presented itself in the disturbed guise of a temporary religious republic, in which energies whose proper direction should be dictated by Religion, might be seen rapt in the zeal of partisanship and restless struggle for pre-eminency. And in this fever of aspiring sectaries, it was easy to foresee the stealthy form of Popery, with its ready bait, false wile, and specious reasoning, winning its unsuspected way over minds too jealous of surrounding rivalry to detect the not-unpalatable poison of the dissembling Physician, or to scrutinise the artful artillery wherewith the citadel of Belief is frequently besieged,—a siege so cunningly contrived and conducted, that the proselyte’s surrender is often startling to himself, and seemingly unreal as “ a phantasma or a dream.”

E.—You have alluded to the Church of Rome as to a spiritual physician. In palmier days she was, in that capacity, most accommodating in her dispensary, and considerate in her cures: but she insisted

* Johnson.

on the patient's faith in her all-sufficiency, and *virtue went not out from her* where this credulity was wanting. For the rest, she had soul-salves at all prices—the costliest, of course, the most mollifying; and herbs in infinite variety—the bitter for the scrupulous and ascetic, and sweeter-savoured for the rich devotionless. And in the matter of preparing for an easy purgatorial probation, the standing prescription in her pharmacopœia was—The needy, lacerate; the wealthy, *pay*. [The old man's countenance fell.] This was her mode of treatment in that drear, dark time, when men had lost sight both of Freedom and their bonds; ere any mind enslaved had risen from the stagnant slough, resolved to burst the manacles which bound it; ere those who sat in darkness had regained any glimpse of the “great light” so long occult. Had that light, on its slow re-issue from the cloud, burst like a blazing meteor on the wide moral wreck, what *human* mind but must have shrunk appalled from the task of that wreck's regeneration?—*who* have deemed himself competent to the mind's cure in *that* diseased condition? Yet, in the wise supervision of Providence, the dark Hour had its indomitable Man, the Exigency its well-equipped Appliance, the monster Falsehood his undaunted Foe—a Foe that in the face of scowling

Principalities dared designate as infernal the chicanery which had sapped the soul's vitals, eclipsed the divine penetration of its eye, and degraded the thoughtful allegiance of reason to a spiritless and automatic routine. O! a daring sway was that Church of Rome's!—a dread responsibility, that of her then representatives!

C.—Dread, indeed, is the accusation against her; for her guilt has not simply been the concealment of truths divine—she has distorted and deformed them: from the lighthouse to which men's souls would, undirected, look for a pure religious ray upon the path of their pilgrimage, she suspended a deceptive beacon: her government was a mystery of iniquity; her ceremonies were a meretricious pageant; her calendar became a populous mythology; her overthrow was a loosing of the prisons to the bound—

E.—And when Freedom smiled in upon the poor succumbent captive, O it is *full* of interest to imagine him uprising from his crouched attitude, and to conceive the new nerve of delight he felt when, walking erect under the clearing firmament, he “saw for himself” a reflex of the Sun of Righteousness gleaming on the starry wings of Hope! But about this *bruit* raised by fault-finders of all creeds, and cavillers

of none—that the papacy has conspirators in our own priesthood; that the upas-tree has taken root at home, and is actually exhaling its pestilent influence under our innocent noses. I have it by oral tale and written story, that dreadful things are discovered by those who have the gift of construing the countenance of Time a little in advance of the events which are to stand registered in his furrowed face. Down the vista of futurity the *very*-far-sighted distinguish honest protestant churchmen aghast at the *exposé* of concealed bones of contention of elephantine magnitude; our dear old Mother in dismay at the desertion of her surpliced servants; and pseudo-protestant clergymen wrangling for precedency in saluting the Pope's toe! One squeezes a sip of solace, however, from the reflection, that predictions in our day are not invariably infallible.

C.—Society is never without a morbid company of members, who are ever busy in making troubles independently of those they were born to, and whose life is an unintermitting “ague-fit of fear.” To them “of comfort no man speak,” rather “of graves, of worms, and epitaphs”—

E.—Monomaniacal forestallers of grief, who insist that *insufficient* for the day is the evil thereof; are

over-exquisite in casting "the fashion of uncertain evils;"* and receive "comfort like cold porridge."† "Tis lamentable that in despite of "saint, sage, and sophist," and the painful schooling of Experience, the votaries and victims of "squint Suspicion" are so many.—But you were observing that—

C.—These, if they discern or fancy they discern a cloud on the horizon's verge, though it be no bigger than a man's hand, foretel a certain and an immediate covering of the entire firmament. Nay, there are minds so strangely constituted, that they will peer many times (if necessary) into the dim distance, in quest of that shadowy omen at which, having seen, they profess to "sorrow as men without hope." The force of prejudice is immense; and "he who would leap over the hedges of custom had need be well mounted."‡ It is Prejudice which views unwillingly the movement going on in the Church—a movement almost entirely defensible by the churchman's charter, the Book of Common Prayer, and yet inveighed against as a symptom fraught with danger. *Supplementary* and whimsical appendages to the prescribed Order may be condemnable, especially if adjuncts to ceremonies themselves non-essential and sometime

* Comus. † Tempest, ii. 1. ‡ Aaron Hill.

disused. Of the thousand tongues of Rumour many are set in agitation by ultra-fincal precisians; but many others are murmuring over a revival most commendable. Against the prejudices of late and present times one might almost as well expect favour for Lucifer as for Laud; yet Laud must not be "mistaken into vice," or be condemned and dismissed unheard. "Ever since I came in place," he said, at the bar of the house of peers, "I have laboured nothing more than that the external publick worship of God, so much slighted in divers parts of this kingdom, might be preserved, and that with as much decency and uniformity as might be. For I evidently saw that the public neglect of God's service in the outward face of it, and the nasty lying of many places dedicated to that service, had almost cast a damp upon the true and inward worship of God, which, while we live in the body, needs external helps, and all little enough to keep it any vigour."

E.—The effort was indisputably laudable;—upon the judiciousness of its manifestation opinions differ.

C.—Those among the clergy who make a *principle* of unity, and who most earnestly strive to enable the Church "to realise the daily supervision of her children,"* are the most suspected of the priesthood.

* Bishop of Winchester.

I impute no papistical prepossessions where they are vehemently alleged to exist; and when I meet with expressions which the "scandalously nice" adduce as evidence of treachery, I lament the unguardedness of the learned, who frequently excite suspicion in the illiterate, by apparent more than by actual inconsistencies. The man who is familiar with the history of the Reformation, must disapprove in part; but it arouses the alarm of the ignorant, to hear that event reprobated, with which he has been instructed to connect the rescue of "pure Religion and undefiled" from the prison-house of Popery and the dense atmosphere of long-accumulating Error. But assuming that favorers of the Popedom—nay, that apostates are at this hour subtly striving to re-infuse Romanism into the Anglican faith, by what instrumentality would their design be most effectually accomplished? Would it be best promoted by intellectual progression or retrogression? Have we of the *tiers-état* attained, indubitably, an intellectual vantage-ground superior to jesuitical jugglery?—might not the sly sybil *whine* into bondage the compliant multitude? The old appliances of persecution and the anathema seem but little calculated for a modern *taming process*.

E.—Why, as to the mind's *retrograde* movement

the old lady in scarlet and her shaven sons would have firstly to close the flood-gates of Literature; and those literary ushers-in and whippers-in, the book-publishers, could, " ere a man might say, Behold!" whistle together a tolerably deep-mouthed opposition. The meridian might of depraved Rome was co-existent with the midnight of the intellect;—it was over *slaves*, groping slaves, that she held the most arbitrary sway. There is not a layman in England who would more strenuously advocate a proper docility to the Church than would I; yet, I say it solemnly, may God forbid our relapsing again into a state of mental prostration, in the imbecility of which it is impossible that He can take pleasure. You mention casuistry and persecution among the instruments which, in an improbable case, the popish priesthood might put in operation. When dissenters, who are never chargeable with *obstinate* adherence, tractable lambs!—when *they* meet humble men of the Isaac Ashford* stamp, who are determined to walk in the "sober light" of the Church, their designation of such character is *bigot*. Now with such an innate bigotry towards protestantism our countrymen are, I believe, too deeply imbued, to imbibe venom, while, from the great Halls of spiritual

* The Parish Register.

Medicine, there issue so many keen discriminators and denouncers of what is base and surreptitious. Then as to persecution—it is a system of policy as cruel in its operation as it is eventually fatal to the cause which it is intended to serve. Its very interference in the promotion of theological unity is a sufficient condemnation of the tenets it would advance; and yet in this particular field of contention, its exercise has been at once more sanguinary and self-destructive than in any other sphere. It is an equivocal instrument in the business of salvation, which slays the body because the soul has an objection to be saved by means prescribed for it; as he would be considered a dangerous physician, who should overcome the imbibitious scruples of his patient by the administration of a lasting quietus. The swords of the magistrate and of the minister are of a contrary temperament: allegiance to spiritual authority—real soul-coercion—enforced by civil power, may possibly be made to assume the semblance of peace—but there is no peace. If we ask, What has Force effected for (avowedly) a spiritual Religion, we find a reply in the *defeat of the system*: and this result was inevitable; for Barbarism can never be the divinely-accredited representative of Benignity, and a process at which

our human nature shudders, is little calculated to reconcile our divine. And if we seek to authorise the cruelty of the agents by the contents of their credential, we find the Potentate's command—"Put up thy sword into the sheath!" and this rebuke of violence to him whose mantle has been claimed as the vest of spiritual supremacy, and whose weapon, in the unrestrained hands of his successors, has since deluged Christendom with gore, in glory of the Restorer of Malchus!

C.—Ay, the records of Rome are too indelibly stained with characters which have but one expressive meaning through all time, to make the enlargement of her sheep-fold a welcome sight to the world.—May Heaven preserve mankind from her maternal *mercies*! The effect of distance is to diminish magnitude; and now, in the calm adoption of any creed or tenet, we are forgetful of the fiery trials of faith, when absolute conformity was enforced by torture. Looking back upon this or that crowded scene with an eye which a lack of interest enervates or intermediate objects divert, our vision is vague and dim; but let us preserve a special focus and a steady gaze, and our emotions of awe and horror become wellnigh as acute in the distant retrospection of these atrocities, as were theirs who had them in immediate review.

E.—The places which *should* have illumined the benighted, were themselves ensepulchred in darkness; the declared home of Christianity—about whose portals, if the heavenly Guest hath indeed her dwelling within, are ever hovering the attendant-angels Charity, Commiseration, and Mercy—became an “habitation of Cruelty;” and

“Victory sickened, ignorant where to rest.” *

Upon human tenderness the tale of her terrible triumphs falls freezingly—it acts like ice upon the heart. In a little book, brought to me by my god-daughter many months ago—the Nun, was it not, Mary?—illustrative of that serious mistake, a monastic life, there occurs a recital of the discipline resorted to in the case of two sisters, whom the powers of darkness had influenced to assert the transcendental authority of scripture over tradition. The narrative is related by one of the victims, and is invested, in many of its details of suffering, with an air of unrepining sufferance and meekness, truly pathetic.—No exaggeration of inflictions, nor show of supernatural endurance, nor sickly supplianee for sympathy, but a dispassionate revelation, bearing on its surface

* Wordsworth.

and in its secrets the impress of authenticity. A picture which cannot have failed to excite holy pity, is that wherein the exiled nuns are represented in a cell, lit by a sad and solitary lamp, and—saving the Presence which no barriers may exclude—are visited only by a spectral female attendant, cold as if carved from alabaster. One is bowed with the weight of years and the tyrannies of the holy *Mother*, and is in sickness, and not far from the strange bosom of Mercy; the other is occupied in administering solace from a purer source than the fountains of traditionary record; and over her dungeon-divinity time elapses unheeded and unknown:

“ Seasons return, but not to them returns
Day or the sweet approach of even or morn.”

This loneliness, and ignorance of day and night, suggest an idea of desolation, which, if not divinely redeemed from *despair*, would thrill through every feeling, as the type of Innocency in eternal abandonment: as it is, Humanity, incredulous, inquires if such recited cruelties can ever have been realised by sentient beings, and they, too, of the finer-fibred creation! Oh, if the accents of oppression ascend from the prisons of the bound, and if every wrong has its

regarded cry and its sure avenging, how fearful a retribution must be in reserve for these enormities; —perpetrated, too, by zealots, whose stony seclusion could not shut out the worst part of their nature, while it often perverted the best; and whom the incentive of an offended superstition did sometimes transform to *furies—in furtherance of the CHRISTIAN faith!*

C.—It is not the least of many and great privileges peculiar to the age in which we live, that *dread* no longer interferes in exercises spiritual; that the scruples of Conscience are respected; and innumerable vagaries, which it would be difficult to affiliate to Conscience, are tolerated on the mere assumption of that honored but hacknied patronymic. But this privilege of exemption from dread, in which all classes may and do participate, operates, I apprehend, but feebly, as a stimulant to general thankfulness. A very large portion of the episcopalian community are deficient in this feeling, and “see no beauty, that they should *desire*” their Church, for her tolerancy to the turbulent, and for that soothing strain of *hope*, which refuses to “shut the gates of Mercy,” where more denunciatory creeds would, sometimes savagely, enthrone Despair. As it regards the non-conforming body, it is not easy to conceive that thankfulness could

very keenly exist in connection with the ubiquity of scruple and morbid sensitiveness of conscience which prevailed of late. The immunities permitted to sectarianism by the conciliatory spirit of past ages, and rightly esteemed by their immediate recipients as privileges, are declared by their clearer-minded successors to be mockeries—partial ameliorations serving only to render all restraint intolerable. A little while ago how many malcontents made it their occupation to recruit and marshal out a ludicrous squad of civil and religious grievances—scarce-apparent pustules at the worst, inflated into loathsome moral tumours!—Most-cheered the jack-a-lantern martyr who boldest bared his arm to show his festering (blue-chalk) scars;

E.—And hoisted, not the revolutionary red-cap nor the mitred cap episcopal, on a pole chequered with sixteen hundred *isms*, but an “old hat with the humour of forty times forty fancies prick’t in’t.”—A dull trope, this, and interruptive; but Will *must* have his way.

C.—The blaze of modern liberalism confuses old-established ideas of freedom, and manifests that to be tyranny, which not long since was toleration. They who had been accustomed to regard Conscience as the inflexible reprover of moral obliquity, were bewildered at the contrariety of its developments.

In the dissentient religious world (with one honorable exception,) the strife had ceased to be for correctness of creeds—the absorbing aim was closeness of confederacy; and advancing into the political boundary, (it was a “narrow bank” and scarcely perceptible that separated the two spheres,) the lamb of spiritual meekness and the lion of avowed republicanism might be seen in most affectionate salutation. The war-cry of the heterogeneous host has, however, died away in the distance; and to the defeated and dispersed tribes is left the sorry—and, let us hope, the salutary reminiscence, of an inglorious and

“Vaulting ambition, which o’erleapt itself.”

“Whatever,” said E. with much seriousness, “may be the defalcation of *others’* gratitude for the peace which now attends the outward practice of Religion, *our* duty is clear. Although by casual discussion frequently *entrainé*, it does not agreeably consort with my disposition, to recur to scenes in human history in which the actors have played unseemly parts; but I derive the charm of music from the story of good deeds. You, who have sternly reprehended the indiscriminate enlistment and chameleon-livery of Conscience, might frown were I to arrogate her sacred sanction to an

objection I entertain against entering, myself, into the survey and the scrutiny of depraved human character. I would hardly dare to dignify this unwillingness by the designation of "conscientious;" but it is nevertheless strengthened by grave admonitions, murmured in Reason's ear, and fortified by this *Réflexion Morale* of Mme. Déshoulières:

"Toujours vains, toujours faux, toujours pleins d'injustices,
Nous crions dans tous nos discours
Contre les passions, les foiblesses, les vices,
Où nous succombons tous les jours."

I have often thought upon a saying of Horace Walpole *âgé*, reverting to a design of Horace Walpole *jeune*;—it not only illustrates aptly, but touchingly, the sharp and summary judgment of character which the young form;—the calm and clement adjudication of the old. "In my youth," he says, "I thought of writing a satire on mankind; but now, in my age, I think I should write an apology for them. Several worthy men, whom I know, fall into such unexpected situations, that to me, who know these situations, their conduct is matter of compassion and not of blame." Besides, conscious of our passions and their propensities, we rush into a position we should sedulously avoid, in arraigning before *ourselves*, at a tribunal

whose pillars are "based on rottenness," our fellow-men, vile though they be: the poor culprit is wont so eagerly to usurp the judgment-seat, and—an outlawed criminal himself—proceeds as with clean hands to accuse and to condemn!

"And what were *we*—frail creatures as we are—
If the All-merciful should mete to us
With the same rigorous measure wherewithal
Sinner to sinner metes?"

"O, Charity!" continued the good Old Man, with still devouter and abstracted earnestness, "O CHARITY! thou maiden whose chiefest majesty is in thy meekness, who shrinkest from sapphire thrones to preside at the hearths of the humble, and who art the herald of all heavenly things!—Celestial Visitant, whose proudest banner is the balm, and whose richest trophy is peace;—thou that wert the first-born of the children of Eternal Love, and that art the joy of seraphs and the spirits of the saints;—Lover of concord, for ever inspiring with unity the harps of the angel-band, and from "the high and holy place" speaking Peace to the sons of men!—fair Favored One of our Father, God, how frail a temple hast thou in our froward hearts! When, O benign Spirit! *when* shall that sterile soil become as Eden with the fruits of thy planting?—

How long shall we boast that thou *hast* made thine abode in our breast, and that thou hast therein an altar which is inviolate, and that we are at one with the vast family of the flesh; and yet so oft awaken to a contest that may not come from *thy* dwelling, and passions that cannot have kindled in *thy* sanctuary, and dark distrustfulness not born of thee—which tell us bodingly that thou, white-mantled Maid! are but the rare denizen of our troubled sphere—art still too much a stranger to our fallen race. Thou hast tuned thy lyre at the eternal Fount, and its burden is evermore of glad tidings; but when shall thy feet be beautiful upon the mountains, and the mountains be made low, that we all may view thy vesture, and know thee from the phantom we now vainly clasp, by the unsullied love that shall in thought and word for ever rise like crystal sparkles from the pure living spring within us?"



COLLOQUY III.



A FEW WORDS UPON SHAKSPEARE.



COLLOQUY III.

A FEW WORDS UPON SHAKSPEARE.

“Death makes no conquest of this Conqueror;
For now he lives in fame, though not in life.”

Julius Cæsar.—SHAKSPEARE.

HAVING attained this stage of intimacy and confidence with the tenant of Ivy Lodge, I thenceforth made a weekly pilgrimage thither, with admirable uniformity. A lawyer's protestation of disinterestedness is so often considered and treated as a matter of levity, that I have long since declined protesting by it, and do not, therefore, assert for the steady constancy of my movements that charm which inflexible regularity derives from the evident absence of self-interest. Were I not constrained by the consciousness, that a complaint urged by so impotent a limb as am I, against that

gross moral injustice (unfortunately not an indictable offence,) which the legal body sustains, in the ceaseless suspicion which attaches to the actions and asseverations of so overwhelming a majority of its members, I would certainly labor hard to blow the cruel *doubt* in every censorious and contumelious eye, till the pains and penalties of ophthalmia should have wrought remorse. The moral mischief which has been done by "squint Suspicion" is incalculable; and the chronicles of the law would, probably, demonstrate its amount more amply and more accurately than those of any other profession not under the immediate cognizance of the police. Faculties cannot be borne for ever meekly, where to the frail bearer is always imputed a brow of bronze; nor can clearness in office preserve its immaculacy, exposed to the perpetual stigma of collusion. I have been a regretful witness to repeated proofs, that virtue, frequently mistaken for vice, has been vitiated; and I know members of the profession who, had fine feeling not been rendered callous by indiscriminate sinister accusations, might even to this day, on coming designedly in contact with the dinner-table of an unsuspecting country gentleman, have disdained to tax him—a non-inviting host—for a passing opinion, proffered *en mangeant*.

I merely hint, *currente calamo*, at the injustice of returning "Disreputable" as a sentence on lawyers *en masse*, and leave the matter with the law-officers of the crown; trusting that a corrective measure may appear feasible, and be announced with the next batch of reforms.

My Ivy-Lodge days were chronologised by white stones; oh! *very* rosy-fronted were those hebdomadal hours. Five summer-evenings had I wandered about the precincts of the Elder's tranquil habitation, listening at times to panegyric, for which a thousand objects in his path supplied him with as many themes. The effervescence of a thankful heart is always euphonious, but old age wondrously mellows its effect, and E. *looked* the gratitude he spake: his was no rotatory or conventional phraseology, no goodly outside to vacuity, no odious nasal twang signifying nothing, but an incontrollable effusion emanating from the glad perception of good in everything. Of continuous colloquy we had little, or if he "talked the flowing hour," I was *distract*: under skiey influences the luscious Summer insisted on such attentions from eye and ear, that garrulity, nathless its melodious flow, was outrivalled; and it was a more delightful avoca-

tion to emulate feminine eulogy, pronounced upon a favorite flower, than to extend a patient hearing to never-wearied senescence, although enthusiastic. And when dear mother Nature threw out Night's vaporious reminder that she must have her twilit drop-scene down awhile on the fair world, to prepare her Pageant of the Constellations, then, within doors, I arrested the commencing Elder upon his own confession, that "Poetry, however sublime, was never so effective alone as when wedded to Music;" so the Godfather resigned himself, in attitude attent—a perfect model to talkative sires, simple fathers or baptismal, who have daughters of delicious note—resigned himself, I say, a charmed listener to the rich, soul-appealing melodies of Mrs. Hemans;—concord of sweet sound entrancing to old men and children, but exceedingly perturbing to young men and maidens pledged to the principle of celibatic independence. And five nights—such nights as make me think the "white-fired maiden" in her dotage now, and her retinue degenerating—five oriental nights had mantled, firstly with carmine caught from the sun's adieu, and then with the pale hue flooding from the pensive moon, that quiet umbrageous retirement, and the Old Man's voice had been subdominant,—heard now and then,

in rapturous comment, in the lull of strains sweet as if wafted over violet-beds, but very variously burdened—now hopeful, now despondent—as the theme of song had sprung forth in bright heart-sunshine or in its sombrous shadows.

In this transitory condition, however, we know that “nought is lasting;” and mankind are pretty well agreed that enjoyment is lamentably short-lived: the converse state is not so ephemeral; indeed, with many there is a woful disproportion between the time given them to laugh in and the time allotted them to mourn. E. seemed strongly of opinion that there was a season for talking as well as a season for singing, and on the sixth evening his conduct portended discussion. A portly volume of Shakspeare was lying open on the table, implying recent perusal of the *Winter's Tale*: the book had been a costly copy of the Poet; and a juvenile observer, of a liberal turn of mind, might, from its broken back and its innumerable paper-scrap projections, have instantly inferred that the book's supporting-shelf was a dusty-visaged sinecurist. Notwithstanding the fealty which every English man and woman owes the Poet-King, I would just then have declined paying prosaic tribute

to any one (always excepting our right-loyally-regarded Lady the Queen), and would still have said,

" Let rich Music's tongue
Unfold imagined happiness ;"

but there was a deliberate purpose in the Elder's manner which forbade remonstrance; and looking at and listening to the earnest Ancient, I became quickly reconciled. Would, only, that I could do his style and manner greater justice.

The Elder, extolling incidentally the exhaustless mines of poetic wealth which modern publication has compressed in waistcoat-pocket editions of Shakspeare and Milton, adverted to the master-minds themselves:

E.—I would shrink abashed from a supposed *critical* stricture on the works of Shakspeare and Milton; for, making no pretension to a correct judgment, and valuing whatever yields me profitable pleasure or leads to the knowledge of myself, fifty years of admiration of what I approve as "good," have left me neither leisure nor inclination to "argue much of evil." But to my uninstructed eye there appears a pervading characteristic in the productions of each of these illustrious minds, wherein, despite occasional aberrancy, we recognise Shakspeare as to *this* world

its proper oracle, and Milton as the oracle of other worlds to this. The one, in his delineation of men, seems to have ascended on an eagle's wing, and with stronger than an eagle's eye to have scanned the mazy line of human character to its utmost verge, touching, in its remote extremes, the angels who keep and those who kept not their first estate:—the other, aiming at “things unattempted,” and advancing into spheres untrodden, appears to have sped upon the pinions of a spirit to the centre of the Triune council, and shared in the arcana of the Eternal. Shakspeare unveils the recess of Passion in man, and traces its every gradation, from the depths of the terrible and the vile, to the eminences of the tender and virtuous:—Milton assumes a similar sovereignty over spiritual worlds, from the profoundest conclave of the apostate, to the sublimest concourse of the adoring; in daring ubiquity we find him now an accessory to the designs of heaven, and now a revealer of the dark deliberations of fiends. Neither Shakspeare, in his universe, nor Milton in his, has submitted to limits, or confines, or demarcation; but each reigns in the infinite. And as with their several portraitures of life it was expedient to connect the scenery and circumstance of its exhibition, therefore the visible creation found a

master-limner in the one, and the regions of the glorified and the outcast in the other: and this tracery of subordinate objects illustrates to perfection the loveliness of the seen, and harmonises well with the imagined grandeur of the invisible.

C.—Around the brow of the most popular of that exalted Two, how strenuous and spreading is the disposition to weave fresh laurel!

E.—Displayed, too, contemporaneously with the decadence of the represented drama. The Poet's conceptions come not now, or rarely come, "bodied forth" in approvable personification; and the Poet's page is the almost-exclusive mirror which reflects his greatness. Yet therein lies a magnetic influence precluding the decay of admiration,—a sovereign indestructible influence, of potency "in every clime and travel where we may;" for now are the isles afar allying themselves in confraternity with the proud Isle of his home, to sempiternalise the name and fame of SHAKSPEARE! Nor must there be a withered leaf in *that* Bard's coronal, while the earth has a green tree or living flower on its surface, and a living hand to cherish and redeck the chaplet!

C.—Hamlet's ejaculation on his poisoned sire—

"Take him for all

I shall not look upon his like again"—

is now become of every-day appropriation, and is not therefore any longer the especial elegy of departed *eminence*. But may it not with singular propriety be applied to its author?—emphatically of *this* Poet, can we hope to look upon *his* like again?

E.—If of this “brief candle,” mortal life, the “better part be burnt out,”* probability might oppose the advent of a Shakspeare secundus; but that same Nature, who “hath framed strange fellows in her time,”† endows no man with authority to predicate from the past the scope or capacities of her future achievements: *she* caverns the mould of which her fantastic creature *man* is fabricated, too profoundly in secret, treasures her substance too “curiously, in the lowest parts of the earth,” to enable the geologist of character, from the analysation of human clay *historic*, to chart out learnedly the substrata of forthcoming developments in form of man. However, “no perfection in reversion shall have a praise in present,”‡ and we may diligently devote *our* praise to excellency which our eyes have seen and our hands have handled. Yet, the beam of assured belief of heaven, wherewith the merciful Creator sustains the anxious creature,—

* 2 Henry iv. i. 2.

† Merchant of Venice, i. 1.

‡ Troilus and Cressida, iii. 2.

a beam which shines brightest upon mortality's expiring embers, and whose divine consolation and guidance cheered the Poet, inspires us also—not with the wavering trust of renowned men of old, with whom a future life was hypothetical, and whose souls' desires for a reunion with seers who had gone before were burdened with misgivings—but with “the sure and certain hope” of looking upon *himself*, in a better country and under a fairer aspect than that, when,

“Beaten and chopp'd with tamed antiquity,”*

William Shakspeare, the mortal, bewailed the marring touch of Time.

C.—The human heart which is the “haunt and main region” of every poet's pen, consists of so much which, as Wordsworth asserts, is *essential* to it and *eternal* there, and these inseparable and immutable qualities have been so comprehensively and, very frequently, so inimitably treated by Shakspeare, that Nature, as far as we are able to conceive her capacity for illustration, could hardly furnish materials for another mind like his, whose empire should be vast, and yet *natural*. In its physiological proportions a contracted sphere, in its spiritual attributes a realm

* Shakspeare. Poems.

of undefined dilatability, it might of this moral metropolis of poets, the heart, be said,

“ a crooked figure may

Attest, in little place, a million;”*

and Shakspeare seems as if by Nature chosen and commissioned as Delineator General of our race, and thus supremely delegated, to have gone forth undauntedly over the expansive and uneven territory of the sentiments and passions of mankind. The Poet has often availed himself of auxiliary aid, and frequently adventures, with no deceptive self-reliance, beyond the boundary of the natural; but *within* that boundary has he left space for a future Shakspeare;—for one who, like his sovereign self, would be “ cabinned, cribbed, confined,” in a kind of *colony of character*; one to whose discursive disposition it would be a natural and uncontrollable necessity to follow in the track of men, wherever Nature dictated?

E.—Thou art unmindful, O Querist, that Nature, of whom thou speakest as in some parts absolute from the beginning, is, in other parts, most evanescent.—Reveal, I adjure thee, before this, our other auditor, after whom it is that well-discerning Will hath, by

* Henry v. Chorus.

the mouth of Hamlet, designated *Frailty*;^{*} and then, admire the fitness of a feminine appellative for that volatile Dame, whom thy imagination doth mistakenly picture as an antique quakeress, clad in unvarying russet, fashioned in starched propriety, and vested with perdurability. Thy device savoureth too much of demureness, friend! Believe it, Nature, though turned of her six thousandth year, is not a straight-laced, crimp-bodiced grandam, of orders grey;—alas for manifold goodmen whom it painfully concerneth, doth she not,—lacking that staidness which might be expected in a mother of millions,—doth she not by example countenance, in mothers of units and of tens, an itching after new apparel? Pardon this levity, most grave and reverend Signor, but the excessive gravity of your latter interrogation too much o’er-tasked my imperturbability; but know, that with a personage ycleped Folly, in a play of Ford,[†] I might truly say, “I love not any whom I laugh not at: pretty strange humour is’t not?” and you might properly reply, with a certain Raybright, “To any one that knows you not, it is.” You suspect the *capability* of Nature to furnish illustrative material for another

* “Frailty, thy name is Woman!” Hamlet, i. 2.

† The Sun’s Darling, i. 1.

Shakspeare, the first having so comprehensively dealt with the permanent passions of the mind; yet the process of time, which may not materially *alter* essential attributes, continually *diversifies* their development; and in the changed aspect we sometimes fail to recognise the individual. The constituent parts of a kaleidoscope are identically the same in each of its fortuitous conformations; but the effect of the least commotion is manifested by a changed figure. The word which better than any other characterises our condition, is *progression*; and Coriolanus, when he thus accuses a fickle mob,

“ With every minute you do change a mind,”*

supplies the whole world with a text on instability. In these mundane mutations the poets find their “ occupation;” and perhaps it is matter for rejoicing that these mutations are not few or far between, supposing that Nature were to have always her quiver full of minstrel-children: monotony, Sir, must have made them warble in a flat key; things would have died in description and looked dusky in song; detail must have engendered *ennui* by disgusting minuteness. Poor Nature herself would have had to endure an

* Coriolanus, i. 1.

inquisition, her inquisitors being her own infants; and they being often "gravelled for lack of matter,"* the old gentlewoman's hairs must, metaphorically, have all been numbered. What a weary session would impatient man have had, before a faded drop-scene! But since our lot is cast where all are at once spectators of and actors in a revolving panorama, tedium is not; and now, exempted from "dropping buckets into empty wells," or giving superfluous coatings to previously-painted lilies, ceaseless configurations supply fresh *matériel* for the Poet, who can with reason only murmur when

"Change grows too changeable—without being new."

The fitful Shelley—a "wandering star," sometimes obscure, at others, coruscating with intense brilliancy—has written so beautifully on this fertile theme, that, like a sweet, sad strain *Æolian*, sweeps over one's memory his wail upon

"MUTABILITY.

"We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

* As You Like it, iv. 1.

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
 Give various response to each varying blast,
 To whose frail frame no second motion brings
 One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest—a dream has power to poison sleep:
 We rise—one wandering thought pollutes the day:
 We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep,
 Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,
 The path of its departure still is free:
 Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow,
 Naught may endure, save Mutability."

The last line has passed into a proverb, and involves a paradox. But to sail back again into the luminous wreathy wake of the Swan:—while circumstance changes, character will change; and *vice versâ* if man be a thing superior to "the beasts that perish;" and he to whom the Desert hath its divinity will ever find its "pools *filled* with water"—he who hath received the true afflatus will never fruitlessly invoke the Muse, so long as, day by day, *unprecedented* feats, fancies, and frailties provoke the exclamation—

"Can such things be,
 Without our *special* wonder?"*

Midway between the creator and the copyist there

* Macbeth, iii. 5.

is a ground which Shakspeare nobly occupies: I mean by his creations those of his productions which are altogether or chiefly ideal, and by his copies such as are representations of individual character; but it is to his art of *conformation* that I allude as to a central ability;—his skill in selecting from the varied soil of humanity, portions of clay of diverse color and consistency, but *human* nevertheless and therefore congruous, and then fabricating these elements into man or woman with such facile grace and consummate verisimilitude, that—the ecstasy of admiration having in a measure subsided—we ask, with such surprise as the knowledge of his measureless power to charm permits,

“What impossible matter will he make easy next?”*

C.—A Quarterly Reviewer has helped us to comprehend the function to which you allude: he says of the mind of Shakspeare, that it was as “a magic mirror, in which all human nature’s possible forms and combinations were present, intuitively and inherently; not conceived, but as connatural portions of his own humanity.”

E.—Would it be just—could admiration so consent

* *Tempest*, ii. 1.

to dwarf the attributes of Royal William Shakspeare, as to admit, that where he did not create he *copied*? Was it among women, to the extremest degree “uncertain—hard to please,” that he found the original complete of witching Rosalind?—well, by the way, for the peace of all ye gallants under forty, that Rosalinds are *rare aves*! Was it after “a child of our grandmother Eve, a female; or for our more *sweet* understanding, a *woman*,”* that he drew, in all its ultra-amazonian proportions, the helpmeet of Macbeth? But apart alike from creation and from conformation, and where the Poet may be said to have drawn from a definite design supplied by Nature, even here do we not involuntarily acknowledge, as our eye is arrested at one or other of the master-strokes where-with his pages abound,

“It is the witness still of excellency!”†

C.—His pages do, indeed, *abound* with treasures. It is not with Shakspeare as with others, illustrious in poetic annals, whose gems are comparatively rare and sometimes cumbrously imbedded; in Shakspeare their “sensible, warm motion,” is everywhere perceptible: we have not far to follow the flowings of *his* most

* *Love's Labour Lost*, i. 1. † *Much Ado about Nothing*, ii. 3.

potent pen, before the heart pauses with dread or hurries on with delectable emotion. Were ever the glowing offspring of Imagination so profusely generated, and seemingly so *inadvertently*?—the giving “a local habitation” to a thousand thronging children of his fancy, appears to have no more impoverished his resources than does the ceaseless current of a mountain-spring exhaust its source. It is the question of a celebrated living writer,* in reference to the Poet’s mental fecundity, “If Shakspeare had lived till now, could he have exhausted his ideas?”

E.—Of a verity, never, never were orient pearls so much at random strung, as by Immortal William! How is it that, in speaking of this Giant among the Great, and with voices, too, touched with veneration, we dare to syllable his deathless name, as though we were his comrades or his friends? Is there witchery in *William* which *John* has not? or, as we regard in their works the Poetic Potentates thus severally distinguished, is our attachment—to one, impetuous; to the other, timorous in its advances—biassed by known distinctive idiosyncrasies? Necker avowed himself thunderstruck with the familiarity of certain—perfumed dilettanti, we may suppose—who spoke of

* Bulwer.

their Pascal, *their* Corneille: Pascal, illustrious in the high-priesthood of Piety, was candidate for a more incorruptible crown than the Muses'; but of a greater than Corneille, I—nay *we*, we British-born, a "band of brothers" in our heart-homage to that Compatriot who hath no compeer—we talk of him as of an elder brother, for we feel that his noble nature would have scorned no fellowship which the traits of that same noble nature had prompted in honest bosoms. His pen, the pregnant channel of poetic thought, continually wins you to the Poet, who carries admiration, and affection with it, by *coups-de-grace* as from a fairy's finger. How the Elf—rest his manes!—went in and out too, and circumambulated, and scaled, and descended, and did as he pleased with, that complex and, to the many, inscrutable structure, the Womanly Heart! Needing no guide but his genius, nor any licence but the general commission you just now spoke of, he entered it as a lord his chateau, sauntered lovingly about its corridors, read many a strange writing on its walls, saw spectacles—how varied!—in its many chambers, and peering into its penetralium or *magazine* perceived, or says he did—the demoiselle may tell us if he fibs:—perceived how puzzling and unimagined is its artillery and modes of action and

strategy, and how that wordy weapons, sharp as very swords, are sometimes softer than butter in their secret meaning. Yet, when he follows the current of his own generous heart's impulses, how high sentiment, noble-heartedness, and "the soul of gentleness," pour out, as at flood-gates, into Shakspeare's Conceptions of Woman! He will tickle you, or as many as have not quite forgotten themselves to stone, when he removes from the busy hive *some* dark sliding-panes, and discloses *la grande passion* in *some* of its machinations—and love is a lugubrious business without laughter;—but as he reveals its silent, abstracted, and devouter workings, he will have you do as he himself does, "with gentle hand, touch," for it is an holy thing. And then, knowing with all its lofty virtue its inherent weakness, with what finely barbed and feathered arrows does he besiege the fortress of feminine love! At this present our colloquial apparatus is hardly enough unstrung for pathos, and we turn in preference to the whirling flight of bluff Harry's blunted cloth-yard. 'Tis said that Dr. Johnson would rather have dispensed with King Will's exhibition of bold King Harry the Fifth, *in formâ proci*; but the lion of Bolt-court sleeps, and inferior animals may therefore more freely disport in "that Realm of Opinion which

no law can reach.”* I would not yet exchange that *sang froid* suit of Harry for a hundred specimens of more rarified sentimentality: 'tis a unique and incomparable exposition of a brave, burly Briton, who would “die, 'tis true; but for love, by the Lord, no!” Certes, after Will's crayon that Conqueror out of his corslet is “the best king of good-fellows;” and many thanks to the Warwickshire Wizard for a peep at fond-heartedness under “a stubborn outside and aspect of iron.”

“I speak to thee plain soldier.—And while thou liv'st, dear Kate, take a fellow of plain and uncoined constancy; for he perforce must do thee right, because he hath not the gift to woo in other places: for these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours—they do always reason themselves out again. What! a speaker is but a prater; a rhyme is but a ballad; a good leg will fall; a straight back will stoop; a black beard will turn white; a curled pate will grow bald; a fair face will wither; a full eye will wax hollow: but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon, or, rather, the sun and not the moon, for it shines bright, and never changes, but keeps his course truly. And what say'st thou then to my love? Speak, my fair, and fairly, I pray thee.”

Kate asks her royal father's master a natural question:

“Is it possible dat I should love the enemy of France?”

and, for her patriotism alone, deserved better things

* Bulwer.

from Hal's hands than this indigestible *morceau* of perplexity:

"No; it is not possible that you should love the enemy of France, Kate: but in loving me you should love the friend of France; *for I love France so well, that I will not part with a village of it*; I will have it *all* mine; and, Kate, when France is mine, and I am yours, then yours is France, and you are mine."

Then Katherine *la plus belle*:

"*I cannot tell vat is dat.*"

And when, at last, the "*divine déesse*" finds the plain soldier irresistible, and surrenders, provided "it shall please *le roy son père*," Harry Plantagenet's portrait-painter displays a conquering sovereign's smile with great significancy:

"Nay, it will please him well, Kate;—it *shall* please him, Kate."

To return again to Shakspeare *general*. Never was there a pioneer who marched by a less circuitous route to the heart's core, or with equal facility recorded its mazy workings and windings serpentine. He possessed a passport—a singular privilege of *entrée*—of permanent validity, in virtue of which he dived to the springs of human action, though they were deeper by fathoms than the love of Rosalind;* and though a host of heart-interpreters have sounded and reported

* As You Like it, iv. 3.

these hidden springs, whose reports have often been enveloped in obscurity well-nigh profound as the springs themselves, yet list to mighty Will, and you have their most lucid exposition, deepest meaning, truest import. Familiar with the world within world, *man*, as with the hornbook of his infancy,

“ Turn him to *any* cause of policy,
The gordian knot of it he will unloose
Familiar as his garter.”

You alluded to the *multiplicity* of poetical beauties which distinguish the page of Shakspeare, and to the inadvertency with which they are dispersed. Numerically, they are, indeed, a lovely legion; and in their careless, unstudied disposition, resemble

“ a forest-bank in Spring,
All flushed with violets and anemones.”

Are there *any* stores like unto Will's, from which admirers, entering with a *cacoethes excerpendi*, return so laden with goodly proofs of Genius, Fancy, Wisdom? Open the massy volume of that

“ *Dear Son of Memory, great Heir of Fame,*”

and over every of its prolific pages may we not each eagerly exclaim, with Fortinbras,

“ I have some rights of memory in this kingdom!” •

• Hamlet, last scene.

It is not possible satisfactorily to specialise beauty, where, as in that teeming treasure-house, the Works of Shakspeare, its developments are innumerable as to the eye of childhood appear the stars of heaven. The casual quotation of passages from *his* works I dislike, though Coleridge, in asserting Shakspeare's unrivalled excellence, stated that "proof positive" of that pre-eminency would be afforded by such a criterion: but the plan is objectionable; if the gem be estimable it should retain its author's setting. I tolerate no vagrancy here, (continued E. laughingly, laying his hand on the volume before him,) not even vagrant admiration: nay, I would conceal air-guns among these priceless leaves, that should explode upon fingers filching for *Excerpta*. Seriously—(you may say to me, as Goneril to her poor old father,

"As you are old and reverend, you should be wise*")—

seriously, then, is it satisfactory to turn Memory adrift here, like a cockle-boat on a shoreless sea? is it not better far to sail leisurely round these flowery coral rocks,—to float slowly and admiringly over beds of gleaming pearl?

C.—While your faculty of speech is recruiting

* King Lear, i. 4.

strength, I frankly plead guilty of trespassing and poaching, against the statute you would establish. The Ivy Lodge quota of luxurious leisure is not, be it remembered, common to many; and in that one volume there is, to those to whom reading is a relaxation from the toil of life, "the labor of an age in piléd" leaves. A casual spoil of yesterday I found in an expression of Goneril's father:

"O, how this mother swells toward my heart!
Hysterica passio! down, thou climbing sorrow,
Thy element's below!"*

In this exclamation there is a remarkable example of the rhetorical figure, *prosopopœia*:

"DOWN, THOU CLIMBING SORROW!"

It would be difficult to adduce many instances in our tongue of personification more terse and emphatic; yet on the Poet's page it occurs but as an ordinary ebullition of the passionate Lear;—there is no flourish of trumpets in its neighbourhood, announcing that a king was about to make a right royal use of language. But the utter absence of oratorical ostentation is one especial characteristic of this voluminous author.

* King Lear, ii. 4.

E.—O! what ineffable modesty may be beholden here, in union with transcendent majesty!—what wondrous ownership of almost superhuman genius, and entire abstinency from pretension;—the giant's strength, exercised with girlish gentleness. Heard you ever this Poet, who, if inexhaustible versatility of mind might be allowed to justify self-complacency, might have lorded it as the Emperor of Egotists—yet where he himself may be suspected of the *parole*, heard you ever a prelude or coda to a passage howsoever grand or brilliant, which could be detected in resolving into “I am Sir Oracle?” Is not the tenor of the Poet's personal plea,

“Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts:”

Was he not speaking for himself, when “admired Miranda” accounted modesty the jewel in her dower? Mark, and inwardly digest, this speaking picture from the *Winter's Tale*, of feeling too intense for words: the king Leontes receives intelligence of his long-lost daughter, and the scene is with the king and an attached lord.

“There was speech in their dumbness—language in their very gesture: they looked as they had heard of a world ransomed or one destroyed: A notable passion of wonder appeared in them; but the wisest beholder, who knew no more than seeing, could not say if the importance were joy or sorrow; but in the extremity of the one it must needs be.”

The allusion to a cause of wonderment so grand as the loss or rescue of a world, sheds an halo of solemnity over this picture, which, as it essays to portray the intensity of paternal emotions, does not shock religious feeling by irreverent misplacement. But let us turn from the painting to the artist. Has he reserved this description for the pomp of royal recitation?—has he allotted it to the humblest even of his heroes? Nay, it comes from one of the dramatist's third-class *personæ*, a *gentleman*;—one of the true Shaksperian school, though, who is not "loth to cast away his speech, having taken great pains to con it,"* but who prefaces this unlabored and exquisite recital with the apologetical assurance,

"I make a broken delivery of the business."

C.—The patient endurance of Hermione, queen of Leontes, in that same play, has always appeared to me an admirable exemplification of a noble woman's deportment under the keenest anguish known to virtue—the suspicion of its fidelity. In seasons when intense feelings rush into the heart like converging and convulsive waves, drowning its utterance, the *eye* frequently supplies a timely conduit from the swelling

* Twelfth-Night, i. v.

flood. No "holy moisture," however, relaxes the tense, tearless sufferings of Hermione; and in the place of that fluent relief to and eloquent advocate of speechless Sorrow, we have the moving protestation of vilified Innocency:

" Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are, the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities; *but I have*
That honourable grief lodged HERE, which burns
*Worse than tears drown !"**

E.—A seeming echo from the inmost hall of Grief! but of grief so uninterpretable, that in listening to those excellent accents of an injured Woman's woe, we may be said to incline our ear but to a parable. The misery of Hermione is of no oral kind;—it must be borne incommunicably because it *cannot* be told: and as it is the privilege of woman's nature to be susceptible of a finer because more sinless order of joy than man's, is not more poignant woe, alas! its contingent penalty? It is an occasional effect of the excess of sorrow to torpify the mind's emotions; and we owe to Maturin this graphic delineation of such an effect:

* Winter's Tale, ii. 2.

“ Her cheek of youth was beautiful,
Till withering sorrow blanch'd the bright rose there:
But *Grief did lay his icy finger on it,*
And chill'd her to a cold and joyless statue.”

But in Hermione there is a *conflict* of strong passions which prevents her acute anguish from lapsing into lethargy. For it is the agony of *one* grand affection which soonest subsides into stupor;—the violence of an *isolated* passion which, from a state of perilous perturbation, declines to passiveness: in Hermione it is not solely the scorned wife who suffers wrong; it is also the loving *mother*, from whom her babe is torn, and she left desolate in her degradation. And well might her unweeping bosom *burn* with its parching burthen of “honorable grief!”—sad spectacle to the imagination, a woman’s breast made thus a battle-field for conflicting calamities—subjected, not to the rapid outrages of a dismantling march, but to the scorching fury of a lasting strife!

C.—Although few of us resemble Geneveve* in preferring songs whose burden is grievous rather than joyous, there is a grandeur in the grief of Hermione which we contemplate admiringly, as the enthusiastic

* In Coleridge’s lines on “Love.”

artist the fascinating features of a *chef-d'œuvre*. It is, in truth, a study, the character of Hermione, of Sorrow majestic in mould and symmetry:—how different in the sanctity of her distress is this cruelly-divorced wife, to the clamorous widow Constance! Hermione longing for her father's presence in her tribulation, "for pity, not revenge;" Constance, in boisterous imprecation—

E.—Call the expression of that ardent Mother's heart *vehement*, not boisterous. Count it pragmatical if you will, but I interpose an objection to "clamour" also, as descriptive of the energy of an anguished mother's love—and it is from anguished love that the fervor, sometimes the *fearful* fervor, of Constance derives its prime impetus. Ah! that maternal instinct, which dwells in many mothers as a profound affection seldom seen in strife, is in Constance developed in the throe and paroxysm of quick *passion*; her heart is as it were a volcano, whence, mingling with the anathemas of indignant wrong, her mother's love gushes like terrific torrents of lava, and you wonder that her bosom is not burned by its indwelling fire. O, but a mystery of mysteries is, in the abstract, a *Mother's love*! of many human feelings unfathomable,

the most fathomless. Well affirms one who knew its intensity,

“ There is none—

In all this cold and hollow world—*no fount*
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A *Mother's* heart !” *

I protest that in all the copious chronicles which tell us of the heart's purest sensations and sympathies, I hear no low but thrilling tones of

“ The still, sad music of Humanity,”

which move me more mightily than does this Beauty of History, told, I fancy, with greater pathos in the French tongue than in ours: its brief exordium likewise justifies recital:

“ Quelle plume pourroit peindre toutes les scènes de douleur ou de joie qui se passent dans le sein d'une mère! Qui pourroit décrire ses tendres sollicitudes pour l'objet de sa tendresse; ses allarmes, ses agitations, lorsqu'elle est en danger de le perdre; son désespoir lorsqu'elle l'a perdu? La femme d'un noble Vénitien, ayant vu mourir son fils unique, s'abandonnoit aux plus cruelles douleurs: un religieux tâchoit de la consoler.—‘ Souvenez-vous,’ lui disoit-il,

* Mrs. Hemans.

‘ du patriarche Abraham, à qui Dieu commanda de plonger lui-même le poignard dans le sein de son fils, et qui obéit, sans murmurer. ‘ Ah! mon révérend père,’ répondit-elle, ‘ *Dieu n’auroit jamais commandé ce sacrifice à une mère!* ’ ”

C.—Nor would any but a mother’s heart have suggested the impossibility of God’s requiring such a sacrifice. How many tender tales are told of maternal love, the most unquenchable and unselfish of the affections; and often how unrequited is it by the object of its solicitude—solicitude which, in its quality of long-sufferance, is of all human properties the nearest of kin to the divine attributes of pitying patience and freeness to forgive; to the marvellous tenacity of maternal above all other tenderness it belongs, to live on through despal and rejection and long acquaintance with grief. Shakspeare, in Lear, has made the maddened king invoke a malediction upon Goneril, which, dire in its import, affords proof of the unbounded degree in which the Poet was conversant with the anatomy of the moral feelings, and with their respective vulnerability to the shafts of Calamity:

“ Turn all her mother’s pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child!”

Of those who have most touchingly depicted the heaven-moulded lineaments of maternal love, conspicuous is the Poetess whose affirmation of a mother's heart being the sole earthly fount of deathless love you just now repeated. "Unused albeit to the melting mood,"* I remember well, that on first reading her lines entitled "Flowers and Music in a Room of Sickness,"—

E.—"Build there, carpenter; the air is sweet!"†

C.—moist symptoms of "my mother came into mine eyes," and "made me play the woman."‡ "It is impossible," remarked an eloquent preacher whom I recently heard, "it is impossible to possess without grief, if not without passion;" and it does indeed appear inevitable to the abode of pure Love, if impetuous, that Sorrow also should have joint possession. No light or easy yoke was that of the Affections to this most passible poetess, with whose lay of love there ever mingled an "under-music of lament:" the tears of her love and sorrow "flow into one another like crystal rivers," which bear along an ark magnificent; from whence proceeds awhile the voice of repining, anon of resignation, and then of rapt anticipation. Her allusions to the land which "Sorrow

* Othello, v. 2. † Troilus and Cressida, iii. 2. ‡ Hen. viii. iii. 2.

and Death may not enter," are, for the most part, glowing images of beatitude; and her spirit's communings with its Source, though differently reported, have much of the impressive and august grandeur of the Night Thoughts. You will remember Lilian, checking the hopeful Mother when she would cheer her child with the promise of again gladly "going forth with the day-spring:"

" Hope it not!

Dream it no more, my mother!—there are things
Known but to God and to the parting soul
Which feels his thrilling summons."

Over many of her paintings there is the mingled gorgeousness and sadness of an autumnal eve. There is a melancholy interest in the meditation of those "mantling shadows" that in their density sometimes shut out from her sight Faith's beckoning finger and Hope's radiant smile: true, in the eternal field of stars the brightest planet may be temporarily eclipsed; but a vision like hers, divinely fostered, could not long be darkened by the April-cloud of Life or the Winter-cloud of Death; and as she advanced nearer to the Everduring Spring, it is the gladness of a triumph to know that

" hour by hour her soul's dissolving shroud,
Melted to radiance like a silvery cloud."

E.—The Muse awarded to Mrs. Hemans a plume from the loveliest of the birds of Paradise, before the plumage had suffered by the Fall; but how those deep, melodious tones of hers, were ever echoing the requiem of Innocence, departing from the stricken scene of her dethronement, when entered

“ Sin into the world, and all our woe.”

Now, however, hath she and Sorrow sundered their alliance, and her lyre hath forgotten its “ *broken music*” since the freed Minstrel attained the apotheosis of her brilliant earthly song—

“ Where fiery passion-clouds have no abode,
And the sky’s temple-arch o’erflows with God.”*

You just now mentioned the Night Thoughts, in remarking upon one of the rich veins in the mine of melody bequeathed to us by Mrs. Hemans—I mean that elevated tone in which she dilates on Life, and Death, and Immortality. Reverting for a moment to Young,—how impressively has that deep Thinker on those tremendous themes portrayed that momentous junction of life with death, to the realisation of which each one, in his own person, is surely but reluctantly

* Despondency and Aspiration.

advancing. Among much that may be turgid and bombastic in the Thoughts of Young, there are also startling outbursts of language, wherein the heaven-aspiring soul speaks vernacularly,—ebullitions of the overwrought and struggling spirit, which have no sympathy with the parade of words that may precede and follow, and which must not suffer deterioration by the suspicion of such a sympathy: it would be unjust to the Poet, and unprofitable to ourselves, to confound those fruitful oases with the quagmires by which they are not seldom surrounded. For my own part, I only perceive the Poet in these significant places—only recognise his voice when oppressed and dwarfish faculties seem to have been long grappling with gigantic meaning, and to have broken suddenly into almost-superhuman utterance. His grand conceptions wrestle in manacles as it were, till their moment of mental manumission, and *then* the Poet's spirit really "speaks with his tongue." I adverted to Young's delineation of the "*union redoutable de la mort et de la vie*."* We may survey many galleries of poetic and prosaic pictures without lighting upon a representation of man going down to silence and the dust, more graphic than this:—

* Madame de Stael.

" Life's little stage is a small eminence,
Inch-high the grave above—that home of man
Where dwells the multitude: we gaze around,
We read their monuments—we sigh—
And while we sigh we sink, and are what we deplore;
Lamenting or lamented all our lot."

There is no waste of canvas or color here—but how effective is the painting!

In the Night Thoughts of Young, the Poet often contemplates and sometimes confronts the Last Enemy; and over the pages which record this spectral intercourse there hovers a weird influence—a charnel-house effect—a gaunt semi-reality of the sable Foe, which, if it be all but unsubstantial shadow, does nevertheless "feelingly persuade us what we are."* Young summons "spirits from the vasty deep," and, more potent than Glendower,† they come at his bidding, and at their approach we involuntarily "commune with our hearts, and are still." Many other Poets have likewise reported ghostly meditation upon death as conditional, and ghostly converse with Death as personal; and in Shakspeare—who not only pursued the vicissitudes of life to the grave and gate of death, but returned with the spirit to assert its wrongs—in his unfailing phrase-book of all our human feelings,

* As You Like it, ii. 1.

† 1 Henry iv. iii. 1.

we find frequent and earnest conjectures upon that condition to which we approximate, whose secrets man learns only when he ceases to be mortal. And these conjectures are conceived in various terms of doubt or definite expectancy, correspondent to the degree in which vague surmise or assured faith prevailed in the individual conjecturing. Yet, whether the soul be left to wander through an uncharted universe at the dictate of its untaught, voluntary impulses, or whether it be guided by precepts which cannot err, and which for ever point to a resting-place encircled by rivers of joy,—*yet* does the immortal soul, a conscious Renegade from Innocency, recoil from its last Retreat:

“ The wide, th’ unbounded prospect lays before us,
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it.”*

Dread instinct, which trembles at the barrier that separates us from bliss; but dread beneficently perpetuated, to restrain the religious from impatience, the rash from precipitancy. Alas! alas! were not man’s Creator his Controller also, how many unprepared creatures would, in fanatic or romantic fervour, have hurried from the hallucinations or danced from

* Cato. Addison.

the delights of this world, to the instant and interminable destiny of the next!

C.—(After a pause.)—The famous soliloquy in Hamlet is, probably, Shakspeare's grandest ideal of the Divine Instinct, contemplating the withdrawal of its corporeal temple—of the Soul, in hushed inexplicable wonderment at what may follow the dread sundering-stroke of Death:

“ To die ; to sleep—

No more ! and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die—to sleep :
To sleep !—perchance to dream ! Ay, there's the rub :
For in that sleep of death *what* dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause !”

But all such questionings are most definitively answered at the bar of Conscience, on the challenge of Truth ; and Shakspeare has arraigned at that tribunal crimes so various in magnitude, and reported mental conflicts so multifarious, with a pen of such personifying power, that in entering upon the subject with him, “ the world is all before us,” and—

E.—Therefore will we choose a momentary place for parlance—not rest, for in the soil couches an

earthquake—only a momentary contemplation of one conscience in revolt—murderous Macbeth's. When I think of the thronged hades of spectral horrors whereby the Poet has illustrated Macbeth's mind, I am sensible of an inclination to the perpendicular in "each particular hair" of the scanty remnant left to me; yet start not thou, meek Maiden! for knowing not "the doctrine of ill-doing,"* little canst thou comprehend the torture that e'en here treads hard on Guilt;—unimaginable to *thy* timidity is the cowardice begot by Crime.

"One cried, 'God bless us!' and 'Amen!' the other,
As they had seen me with these hangman's-hands:
I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH.—Consider it not so deeply.

MACB.—*But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen?'* "

Ah! Mr. C., were all our designs invariably referred to the court of equity that sits within;—were the representative of Justice untampered with, and its decrees made absolute in our actions, soon would shoals of a certain species of fish—by some naturalists called the land-shark—offend by stagnancy the air at West-

* Winter's Tale, i. 2.

minster and elsewhere. Mourning, ye gowned gentry! your occupation gone, are there many who, in grievous destitution of chattels, might righteously compute as their own, *both*

“ Their robe and their integrity to heaven?”

* * * *

Now were you to forswear Ivy Lodge for ever, in dudgeon, or as the penalty of its occupier's prolixity, I could not forbear mentioning a colloquy in *Measure for Measure*, between majestic Isabella and her more craven brother Claudio: the circumstances are her dishonor, or the alternative, his loss of life. “ The dread of something *after* death” unmans him, and he quails in shuddering hesitancy between opposing causes;—before him are shadowy horrors; behind, the urgent, lofty, and indignant honor of his sister. “ Death,” murmurs the reluctant sacrifice,

“ Death is a fearful thing !

ISABELLA.—And shamed life a hateful.

CLAUDIO.—Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot ;
This sensible, warm motion to become
A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice ;

To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendant world ; or to be worse than worst
Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling !—'tis too horrible !
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death !"

The garrulous Old Man identified himself so perfectly with the shrinking Claudio in the recital of this fine passage, that when he resumed his original character I fell back on the Sun's Darling (from which he had previously quoted,) for an exclamation of Raybright—

" Your eyes amazed me first, but now mine ears
Feel your tongue's charm !"

E.—Nay, to great Will the creator be the praise, none to the mere earthen vessel. But now, having dwelt at tolerable—or, haply, intolerable length, on the dread of death and the timidity of wisdom, turn we to what my friend Folly might have laughed at as "the bravery of ignorance." Know firstly, then, that urchinless myself, I have the honor to be on excellent terms with half-a-dozen of the rosiest rogues you ever smiled to look at, the property respectively

of three humble neighbours. The hour has some time gone since the imagery alone of grace and beauty had power to captivate,—when I feasted after the regimen of Robbie Burns, “the admiring a fine woman;” and long hath the sage maximist, William of immortal memory, convinced me that goodness is the essential gold of loveliness—“Virtue of beauty.” And with these changed feelings—travelling farther from the East (*sic* Wordsworth,) into the fading light of near-spent day, I find a new pleasure in the frank, fond heart—the “spritefulness, fair cheeks, and full eyes of childhood.” It would cheer you in a December distress to see the ruddy fronts of the fellows of whom I spoke, to whom I let out joy on short leases by a word in season, a penny never out of season, and an approving pat on the head; and how pitiable the pale, precocious lads in town appear, to these, my jocund youngers! The mother of one of them—a reckless, super-rosy rebel, rising five—told me the other day, that the child had been to witness the funeral of a person of excessive corpulency, and came home with a serious look unusual. A resolution suggested by the ponderosity of the dead man, and the hour of his interment, was brooding in him, and, when duly matured, burst in a request to his

mother, that *he* might not be buried in the *afternoon* of a winter-day—in case *he* should'nt get to heaven *before dark!*

The sixth stroke towards ten was sounding, when E.'s veteran retainer announced the vehicle in which his daughter-in-baptism was accustomed to migrate to and from Ivy Lodge. There was a striking contrast in the physiognomical aspects of the Elder and his servant; for while the former was habitually mirthful, there was a settled sedateness in the face of the latter which remained unruffled, either by smile or frown, under the raillery of his voluble but kind superior. His gesture, too, was desperately methodical; evincing none of that submission to impulse which ever animated the demeanor of his master. On that declining plane of our mortal term, wherefrom, when man brings his years to an end, he slides into the grave, it was hard to say which of the two was foremost; but if the domestic were "under authority," he did not appear to derive contentment in the especial circumstance of contiguity with a clime in which distinctions cease—in the prospect of a situation without servitude, or such as is perfect freedom. If his were a gravity impressed by con-

temptation of the grave—and a thoughtless man would not long have sojourned with E.—the object of his contemplation must have been hung with branches of yew and cypress, to which he was advancing through a vale of tears; to the Elder, in whose tone when conversing upon “the inevitable hour” there was neither timor nor presumptuous confidence, the narrow-house seemed garlanded more than sadly closed in with evergreen. This was the outline of his argument:—“It is not meet that guests-expectant of a Great King, such as is He who claims our souls’ allegiance—that children journeying to the home of a Father, who waits to welcome them by a better name than sons—should march mournfully to their eternal mansions; and though we lay our bodies down to moulder for a while in the *vestibule* of the Sovereign’s court—at the threshold of the home of spirits—hath not One, mighty to save, prepared at infinite cost a pathway for the disembodied divinity, by which it mounts through the else trackless space to its celestial father-land? The dust importunes us in the pleadings of natural alliance, and our voices catch a gloomy tone from its importunity; while we, meantime forgetful that we are but temporary aliens from angelic fellowship, sadden the hours of our exile, by suspending our harps

upon the willows, instead of sounding them to songs of thankfulness for that measureless gift of promise—life in the land of Love—whereof, to the grateful, the earnest of possession is anticipated, through the inspiration of Heaven's prime legate, Hope! "Why," then, "should tears be in the old man's eye?—

" *Why* should we, then, with an untoward mind,
And in the weakness of humanity,
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away,
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,
And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?"*

The stroke was on six, I said, when Mary was favored with an injunction to move: whereupon E. rejoined,

Now fie, say I, upon thy pestilent punctuality, punctilious Ben! who, nathless that our pates have whitened in company, hast no consideration for my peace of mind—positively none! Harkee, Benjamin the inflexible! since Mr. C., in unappreciable kindness to thy grim-visaged grandson, has chosen to be my bonny half-bairn's charioteer, I suspect thou hast, in gratitude to him propelled the movements of the clocks, sir. Now it contenteth the responsible tenant

* The Excursion. Wordsworth.

of the Lodge to *keep up* with the age—nay, Ben, to jog along a little in the rear: but say, O Watchman set in alabaster! what of the night?

Benjamin replies, and makes his exit; and the Elder changes his key:

Within those stolid and impassive outworks there beats a brave heart and warm; and if Benjamin were taken from me, then indeed should I be bereaved. If there *are* two living creatures who understand each other better than do Ben and I, it would gratify my curiosity to see them.—My pleasantry passes by him, as you observe, like an idle wind; and though it may secretly affright his staid propriety, it never disturbs his serenity. Once only did he ever dubiously regard me; it was when, in gardening operations, I declared myself almost a proselyte to the Wordsworthian theory of a sentient principle in plants: at what he thought and called the *monstrous* “faith,

“ that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes;

infidelity, graven as in adamant, was so perspicuously the expression of his physiognomy, that, rather than endanger the issue of a writ *De lunatico*, at the suit of my servants, I suffer Benjamin to remain in un-

molested herbal heathenism. But we are deserting our Idol of the evening, without one praiseful or valedictory farewell. Be thine, O honored WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE! a lofty throne where all are kings!—anon of thee, Monarch of the Muses' Sons! And bless thee, darling Child, Mary *avourneen*! Look now, the sky is one wide smile, but chastened, for the glittering orbs are in adoration, could we but hear them. Or rather, is it not the Boundary of the Blest we see above us? and what we count as shining stars, are they not angels' eyes—bright, but full of pity as they gaze on a scene which the presence of *their* God does not gladden? Ay, therein lies the secret of the pensiveness of Night! Surely at this moment is God beautifying and hallowing the world with his blessing; and living things are breathing—scarcely breathing is the silent Earth—as conscious of the effluence of Heaven. A fond farewell, sweet Mary!—

“Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered!”

COLLOQUY IV.

CONCERNING, CHIEFLY,
"THE BLIND OLD MAN, AND HIS IMMORTAL STORY
OF A LOST PARADISE."



COLLOQUY IV.

TWENTY MINUTES TALK ABOUT MILTON.

“ I am become A NAME :

I am a part of all that I have met:

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro’

Gleams that untravell’d world, whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.”—TENNYSON.

It would be a mode of procedure quite un-English, to enter upon several consecutive colloquies without commenting on the state of *the weather*. Moreover when, without violating Truth to gratify Patriotism, a compliment *can* be paid to the climate of his country, it is a Briton’s duty to do so; for foreign calumnies upon our native skies are permitted to provoke undue contumely also from a people incontinently prone to grumble among themselves at much that invigorates their individual constitution and national. Touching that basely-traduced atmospherical production, called English weather, we owe an im-

mense amount of thanksgiving to that more dauntless class of Nature's minstrels, who, leaving gentler poets to sound their pæans to the praise of stars and zephyrs, proclaim the sterner merits of hail, snow, wind, storm, and vapour. And, chiefly because eccentric and half-anomalous, among this "dauntless" band, let us elect the mild Cowper, for himself and clan, as the recipient of our gratulations. It is pleasure, slightly tinged with pity, to accompany the valiant valetudinarian—bold in seclusion, timid in the shock of men—while he scourges the "pleasant vices" of the herd, which he, "a stricken deer," had quitted;—right comfortable is it to see him putting upon his country a commanding aspect which he could not put upon himself; and to hear him thus venting the healthy vigor of his English heart, before one of the gloomiest of national pictures—

"Though thy clime

Be fickle, and thy year most part deformed
With dripping rains, or withered by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies
And fields without a flower, for warmer France
With all her vines, nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage and her myrtle bowers."

Now in the creed of one at least (and of the least) of his compatriots, of few pleasanter sensations is this cold hut of human clay susceptible, than when the

genial sun melts all the heart within it into a *gâté* so diffusive, that after inundating all its environs with its flood of joy, it extends a lavish flow of compassion to those misjudging masses abroad, who imagine the Indomitable Isle to be enveloped in perpetual *brouillards*. If Variety be "the very spice of life," as some have chosen to denominate it, then life in England is surely highly flavoured, elementally: still there are who complain fastidiously that the element is not to their taste; and the ærial ragout is taken with especially-wry faces by nervous elderlings subject *à l'ennuyeuse maladie, ce de conserver la santé par un trop grand régime*.* In the course of a brief professional career, I have advocated more dispiriting causes than that which now, without con-si-de-ration of any kind, I have undertaken on behalf of the climate of my country. Addressing, of course, a discriminating jury, I contend, of course with deference, that to an English subject on whose amiable temperament the evidence of sociality has a soothing effect, and who (perchance not caring "to unsphere the spirit of Plato,") may, in the lower walks of practical philosophy, be placidly making the best of his condition at all times and in all places,—to such an

* *La Rochefoucauld*.

one it cannot be merely reconciliatory, it is more a matter of active rejoicing, that the Four Seasons which preside over his country's year, and exercise extensive influence on his country's weal, should present, as they do, a truly edifying example of good fellowship in their intercourse with each other. Now this disposition is rarely found in a limited coterie, where separate interests strongly prevail, and jealousy is prompt to rise at officious intermeddling. Our Seasons maintain a most cordial intimacy, exchanging visits *en déshabille*; and that lively movement of barometrical mercury at which a maledictory man might rail, the complacent jury I have the honor to address would delight in, as an indubitable token that one of the subdominant triad was passing compliments with the regnant Season. Where, too, in this "low-thoughted" sphere, a small number of functionaries attain alternatively a chief and brief authority, their individual period of pre-eminency is very nicely marked:—our British Seasons scorn a duration of presidency so accurately defined;—there is a noble free-and-easiness in each one's entrance upon empire, and exit from it, that expands the ideas to reflect upon. And in this their habit of frequent intervisitation, the more sanguine of the panel before

which I am privileged to plead, will immediately recognise the interest which the entire Quaternity take in the affairs of Earth. Blessings in this present condition of existence are wisely qualified with evil—wholesomely bittered, no doubt—and we continue to lament in sorrow as the sparks fly upwards; so that, were it absurdly unreasonable, it is conformable to very ancient custom, to regret, that when the volatile Harbinger of welcome Father Christmas looks abroad unexpectedly, (and he does, allowedly, give the rein rather freely to Caprice,) there should be a cramping influence in his eye, which now denudes shrubs, &c. when a family's birthright might be had for a blanket; and now creates a panic on the banks, at which even hardy snowdrops gasp “*t-r-o-p fort!*” and go off in convulsions,—which staggers itinerant melodists in mid-air, excites a general shudder among nestlings whose mothers are from home, and hurries many a newly-perfected chrysalis to a bourne from whence no butterfly returns. The prior of these effects, brought about by the veteran Winter's visitings to the mellow matron Autumn, has a beneficial counter-operation, opening the heart to Charity, and reminding the benevolent in high places, that in lower places the large family of Penury will soon look longingly

for wonted "little acts of love;" and if, in the liberality of his nature, he acts as proxy for Spring while yet an infant, who can resent his courtesy? Howbeit, in social reciprocity the Rulers of the British Year exercise dominion:—by-and-by (is not pertness common to the very, *very* pretty?) the bright-eyed Spring bids mimic defiance to her bald-pated Predecessor, who (made crusty perhaps by her jocose excesses,) blows bitingly upon her cheek of smiles, sometimes even to their scattering;—and, later, (is there a beating heart which such solicitude affects not?) how often do we perceive the ardent Summer adventuring into the realm of retiring Autumn, to bless with one more kiss the Earth's frail offspring, ere Autumn confide them in their death to be sepultured in snowy cearments by the hand of Winter.

The loving Summer retired from active duty in 1841 with blushing honors thick upon her. A fiat had gone forth, benedictory to the harvest and the store, and she had responded cheerily to His benevolent will whose ministress she is: the burdened fields therefore stood so thick with corn, that the churl might have found their rejoicing contagious, as by hill-side and lowland the ripening grain bent its burnished head to the soft breeze. It was making

glad the heart of man, and kept time to its low congratulatory chant in these gentle undulations, as at sweet music, lovely Lady, you may have swayed your own fair form, impulsively. O, WORDSWORTH! chief among the wise who proclaim a sentient attribute in whatsoever the Inscrutable hath endowed with *life*, a glorifying creed is thine, and is not visionary.—Conscious, by the demonstrations of science, that we are in contact with fecund animation, though to the eye invisible, is it Wisdom which contemns the probability that we are dwellers in a *vocal* universe, because upon our drowsied sense no audible accents fall? If the *eye* be veiled from the perception of an animated, why may not the *ear* be deafened to an articulate world? Constructed and capacitated as we now are, the Eternal “hath done wisely to conceal” from this, our orbéd observatory, a view as much too vivid for our comfort as for our comprehension; for how much greater latitude of emotion should we require above that which we possess, if to the little microcosm, man, the vast and busy creation were suddenly manifested in all its marvellous operations. But this acquisition of intelligence is wisely reserved for a period when awe and wonder shall be excited by many mighty discoveries, beside those pertaining

to our terrestrial sojourn: yet, among those discoveries, *thy* faith, persevering Interpreter of the Invisible and Inaudible! shall, doubtlessly, approve its demonstrator and defender to have possessed a vision clarified above his contemporaries,—a mind whose ideality was less a baseless fabric of the fancy than the rudiments and outline of a grand reality, which the rolling away of cataract and cloud from human sight shall leave disclosed, in the fulness and perfection of a divine development.

Towards the close of an Autumn day, (of which digression has so procrastinated the description, that now I decline it altogether,) the Elder in a rustic, ivy-covered garden-seat, was luxuriating in the light of a setting sun, the quivering song of the more wakeful or belated of the feathered quire, and the company of rosy-tinted but well-nigh wearied flowers.

“ Ah!” said he, on observing me, “ is not this a season and a scene in which, if ever, we may imagine the primal state of our first progenitors, when, seated in a sinless sanctuary, and sheltered by their Maker’s smile, they watched this wondrous receding of Day and solemn approach of Night? But I was gazing slothfully when I saw you—

“ Thought was not—in enjoyment it expired”

as I sat imbibing the still spirit of the spectacle—
for it is eminently one of those, whereof

“ The colours and the forms are unto us
An appetite—a feeling and a love
Which have no need of a remoter charm
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrow'd from the eye.”

I expressed regret that, by obtruding, I had broken the spell which had bound him in so blissful a state of bondage.

E.—Save your regrettings for a more deserving occasion: I prefer *quick* feelings to supine;—silent felicity engenders indolence of thought, and that which is now voluptuousness, presently degenerates to vapidity. How potent are external influences upon the mind—so various, too, in their effects, that the inner world of the feelings makes its diurnal revolution, and exhibits a different phase at morn, and noon, and eve, and night. When I go out in the fresh vigor of the dawn, and am in health, I feel to this day something of the exultation of my early life, when Care went not up with me at morn into the high places, and every ecstatic throb of the heart, could it have spoken, would have

“ Bless'd God for the mountains!”

“ Mornings are mysteries,” says an old poet:* their effect of light and air stirred up electrically the whole inert and latent joy within me, and my mood was wildly thankful;—the wildness has somewhat abated, owing to “ auld acquaintance” with him of whom (pointing to his forehead,) these indentures witness, aided by the circumstance of having here no hills to climb; yet my out-door morning feelings could not, even now, be called *serene*.

“ It is very different in this holy hour of eve, when the West summons every eye to witness this gorgeous pageantry of the Sun’s descent, and Earth regards her life-giver’s departure in admiration mute;—and the sadness of a farewell prevails; for living things look anxiously upon their source of life, and seem to dread his going down, as if there were a danger of his not returning. We feel no predominant passion now to ‘ bless God for the mountains;’ our paramount praise is for the hope of glory; and, that yielded, in sober gratitude for all this merciful manifestation of Power and Wisdom, we pour forth the full heart of adoration in strains like these, too majestically-moving for *my* befitting utterance during the *abandon* of the morn:—

* Henry Vaughan.

' These are thy glorious works, Parent of good !
Almighty ! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair ; Thyself how wondrous then !
Unspeakable, who sitt'st above these heav'ns
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and pow'r divine.' "

The Old Man's voice discoursed eloquent music, but he *looked* unutterable meaning: "the sweet face of the Night" had solemnised his manner, and he retained unwonted gravity: his varieties of feeling were exceedingly remote, but were always expressive and never extravagant;—they were not "*piteous* revolutions." It seemed as if the hymn from which he had quoted in the garden had supplied him adventitiously with a text whereupon to descant; for on adjourning to the interior he opened the Paradise Lost, and commenced devoutly:

E.—Entering on this Poem we feel, or ought to feel, that we are in sacred precincts, and that at its elevated threshold we should put away from us the defilement of mean associations. Resigning ourselves to an atlantean and adventurous Guide, we are carried to the black and sulphurous abyss of anarchy,—are wafted through infinite space,—and ascend, "by degrees magnificent, beyond the wall of heaven."—

But the way, which is sometimes drear and dark, is at other times labyrinthine and obscure; and well it is if, where we cannot move by sight, we firmly proceed by faith; for lore which the Omniscient withheld from "holy men of old," He has not in these latter days communicated; and therefore Milton, in the process of an argument, anticipatory of man's creation and historic of his fall, has found himself in occasional embarrassment in "vindicating" the Eternal.—And necessarily so; for His thoughts are not our thoughts, and *who* hath been His counsellor? In the Father's address to the Son, for instance, contemplating the seduction of our Sire by satanic guile, the Poet is in one of those inscrutable involutions of "foreknowledge, will, and fate," which Inspiration has not elucidated, and at which, in this world, Reason must gaze—if it insist on gazing—as through a glass darkly. And to me it has ever seemed an awful provocation to the All-wise to lay bare His *arm*, when captious human Reason would dictate to the Deity the larger degree to which, for that poor querulous Reason's-satisfaction, it would have Him lay bare His *Mind*. Now that the original terms of obedience have been revoked by rebellion, our present terms of *faith* follow as from intelligible premises, and are based on the partial

concealment of the plan of Providence; for there could be no exercise of credence if all that concerns our hope and trust were manifest. Yet how ample the foundation laid for the superstructure of our faith, would we not cumber it with our gainsayings! Beset by the machinations of a mighty Foe, are we not bidden to confide boldly in a more puissant Friend?

“ O, but man—proud man!
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,”

protests!—cavils with his Creator! The tenant of an hour, from his tabernacle of corruption, engages in controversy with the Architect and Pervader of the universe—impugns the Mind of which his loftier part is now but a polluted essence! Oh! disclaiming impious comparison, next among marvels to the love of God, is the presumption of the outcast, *man*.

“ The abstract contemplation of a lost paradise incites to a fruitless lament for felicity we never knew, which, however, gives way to a profound contentment, when we gather under survey of our pining souls the reinforcements provided by our Religion, which, ordinarily, we permit to remain too much in ineffective reserve;—we conceal in secret, inanimate ambush, the invincibly-accoutred legion

whose rightful post is in the van of our daily conflict. In the strife we have hourly to sustain, we draw not largely enough on our almighty Ally, who, though we too oft forget, remembers ever that we are but dust: and considering that our hearts' instinctive craving is for a consolation they cannot find in the world's corrupted cisterns, it is curious they should leave comparatively forsaken the fountain which flows with the only efficient solace for the sinking spirit. Marshalling the array of evidence which Heaven has unrolled before the ken of humanity, the mind erects itself on an impregnable rampart, from whence it placidly regards the confusions and perplexities of life, and arms its hopes with weapons which, wrought in a celestial armoury, scatter this world's disheartenments swiftly as at the sword of Michael the rebel angels fled. I delight in the assertion, and in its reiteration, that 'there is nothing so *reasonable* as Religion:'—assuredly there is nothing so protective, for the feeble being whose reliance it is, 'gathers a force and faith under him, which nature of itself could never attain;'^{*}—there is nothing so consolatory, for 'it creates new hopes when all earthly hopes fail;'[†]—there is nothing so ennobling, for the cease-

^{*} Lord Bacon.

[†] Sir Humphrey Davy.

less employment of the religious man is the 'fitting up his mind and preparing it for a glorious abode;'* and in reference to an effect seldom insisted on, 'you may depend upon it religion is, in its essence, the most *gentlemanly* thing in the world: it will *alone gentlize*, if unmixed with cant, and I know nothing else that will, alone.'†

"I sometimes think, that in the dread Day of Award Silence will for a moment seal the lips of the redeemed, while, with sublimated glance, they survey the various pathways whereby the ardent seekers after Truth have attained their goal, and what impediments they have battled with and beaten, and dispirittings surmounted: but silence may endure but for a moment! —the amazing Love that ransomed, and righteous Judgment that adjudicates, shall awaken in Heaven's 'new possessors' a spontaneous and accordant shout, so mighty, that through the realm of God their rapture shall drown in its loud resonance the minstrelsy that ceases never to magnify the Most High. For, methinks, the harp and lute of those who never knew distrust of soul or sorrow of heart *cannot* rival the voices which *triumph* shall animate; the blessings of those whose high estate has shut out woe, *must* be overborne

* Goldsmith.

† Coleridge.

by theirs to whom the transition is from anguish to bliss; the adoration of those to whom Justice has never been ‘invisible, or dimly seen,’ shall certainly be overwhelmed in their acclamations who, once, it may be, dubious, shall view the All-adorable in the refulgent sanctity of His most perfect ‘vindication.’

“ I know of no scepticism or scruples from certain apparent incongruities which meditative men have told me debar them from a devout acceptance of the creed on which our souls’ hopes are founded;—that infinite Perfection, armed with a controlling power, is yet permissive of the propagation of Evil; that Purity, although it abhors and denounces, coerces not. I am not confounded by the sufferings of the virtuous, the sorrows of the good, the seeming exemption of the vile, the ostensible ease of the indifferent, the occasional perplexity of the inquiring. These are incidents contingent with, and partly constituting, the probationary process by which, through privation and discouragement, we are re-fitted for Paradise. —I have found *my* questionings of *possibility* most prone to rise, over the chronicles of God’s *compassion*: His power and His providential bounty are properties both visible and tangible; but that THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY should have assumed our nature, and

in it have endured rejection from those whom He came to ransom;—that in virulence and violence He should yet have summoned no awe-struck legions from the realms of light, to avenge the indignities their celestial Chief was enduring at the hands of men, in order that he might snatch them as brands from the burning;—that though the penalty of the prodigious enterprise was a sustenance of the Curse, under which he who bore it must yield his heart's blood, now in protracted passion through the imperceptible pore, and then in sacrificial agony through the gaping wound;—that immaculate and infinite *Compassion*, without demeaning the divinity, should taste of death in its most degraded form, that earth's grovelling ingrate might be exalted among 'the enthroned gods in sainted seats,' is an exaction upon the faith of a contemplative mind that might disturb it with incredulity, were the records less trustworthy which relate, to selfish men, the mystical vastness of the divine sympathy.

“ One especial moral springs from the meditation of this marvellous oblation of Love—there can be no sympathy in heaven with the self-sufficient. From the hour of that most daring insurrection in Thine own abode, has it not been seen, that,

‘ Merciful Heaven!

Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,
Splitt’st the unwedgable and gnarled oak
Than the soft myrtle?’*

“ I have perambulated far from the Poem, in all this; but serious thoughts flow naturally from its solemn theme, and forcibly to divert or counteract their current is ill beseeeming a man who cannot be far distant from ‘ an abiding city, a place in another country, where he must rest or else be restless for ever.’† Let us however enter, for a little while, this Lost Paradise, at whose exterior we have thus lingered.

“ Yet, pausing for a brief moment at its entrance, is it not beyond expression interesting, to review, through the medium of truthful history and apocryphal tradition, the process by which this stupendous poetic pyramid was reared—a structure so unapproachable in the grandeur of its symmetry, that the solitary achievements of others—imposing when solitarily surveyed—appear insignificant if placed in juxtaposition with it. There exists an indestructible cluster of the habitations of Poesy, distinguished by various charms; but they shrink into shadow when viewed

* Measure for Measure.—Shakspeare.

† Taylor.

by an eye which the contemplation of dimensions so vast has distended and enlarged. ‘It is not the *greatest* of heroic poems, only because it is not the *first*,’ says Dr. Johnson; but stands it not unparalleled in its *sublimity*? From what we know of Milton’s self-dependency, I fancy there was never a Poet who, conscious of having consummated a great work, of which many co-operating causes might tend to mar the reputation at the period of its completion, confided so assuredly in ultimate appreciation, as did this illustrious man. The contrast between Milton and Shakspeare in this respect, is remarkable: the latter sensitively shrinks from posthumous notoriety; and in his poems almost painfully protests against being made a candidate for the plaudits of posterity:—

“O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
Lest the wise world mock.” * *

And again,

“O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you.
For I am shamed by that which I bring forth.”

If thou hast ears to hear, O Shade of Shakspeare!

know that 'the wise world' persists in a contrary notion. But 'the blind Old Man,' whose intrepidity urged him beyond 'the flaming bounds of place and time,' knew no distrust in his reliance on succeeding ages. He had carved for himself a shrine around which Genius in the years to come should wander with suspended breathings; had built for himself, and consciously, a 'live-long monument;' had fore-sepulchred himself in the reverent remembrance of posterity; had graven in the Roll of the Renowned the name of 'MILTON,' in characters which the failure of intelligence might obscure, but which the flight of Time could not efface. And so—I speak of him as moved by 'fond hopes of glory,'—upheld by the conviction that he had left to future ages a fame they 'would not willingly let die,' he could move on towards Death with the serene dignity of a mighty man from whom Prejudice had withholden cotemporaneous approbation, but whom the Past had taught to regard that present approbation as subsidiary. For him, as with the Great in every generation,

' Enough, if something from his hand had power
To live, and act, and serve the *future* hour;'

and a guarantee for the durability of his fame might

be found in the theme he had chosen; for man's interest in it was 'infused at the creation of the kind,' and for ever will it closely 'come home to men's business and bosoms;'—long as a sentient being, conversant with the Poet's language and the light of letters, mourns in this lower world his alienation from a better, so long will that sublime story be reverently perused, which treats

‘ Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.’

“ The Poet's theme involves our grandest interests, and his illustration of it caught inspiration from its grandeur. As *he* conceived and prosecuted its ‘ argument,’ a matter of universal moment was removed so far beyond the sphere in which human reason and imagination are wont to dilate, that had it not been sustained by a gigantic intellect, the proud essay would have provoked reproach;—he explored regions so distant in their latitude and character from this ‘ dim spot which men call Earth,’—assumed a cognizance of beings between whom and us so great a gulf is fixed, that had his design been undevout, his

temerity were of the order of Prometheus. To 'vindicate' the Infinite to the finite is the high office of sacred ambassadors, effected best by the pure simplicity of His word; but here we witness the Deity vindicated to the child of dust, by a basement and partial outwork of corroborated truth, built upon and filled in by a fancy which, though fallen and fallible, was abashed to no arrestive degree by the consciousness of frailty—confined within no boundary of being;—wiser than Uriel, nigh to God—than Satan, chief in hell: with buoyancy to soar to the sublimest turret of the pavilion of Heaven's King, with gravamen to descend to the profoundest mine of dark confederate fiends, with elasticity to expand over all space; above, in more than Sinai-like proximity with The Presence in whose radiance the angels veil; beneath, in dread vicinity with the Arch-rebel at whose voice 'the hollow deep of hell resounds.'—These are associations that enter into Milton's justification of God, itself 'justified only by success.*"

C.—Numerous are the opinions that take possession of our minds without a substantial title, and (probably from getting into company with our prejudices,) become exceedingly difficult to dislodge.

* Johnson.

One of such has accustomed me to attribute to the *blindness* of Milton more than his commentators have attributed, of the sublimity and profundity of the *Paradise Lost*. Next to the extinction of "the heaven-lighted lamp" of reason, the saddest sensual deprivation known to man is generally esteemed to be the loss of sight: the absence of no other sense appeals so movingly to our common sympathy; there is no pathos like the plea of the blind. But if we estimate the mind as our chief endowment, and esteem its culture as our chief concern, we shall perceive how different are the degrees of misfortune dependent on the period at which the faculties of the mind's principal agent are suspended. The eloquent lamentations of Milton in his "irrecoverable darkness," both in his *Great Poem* and in *Samson*, dissolve the heart by their intense and pervading plaintiveness: in his sonnet to Cyriac Skinner the spirit of complaint retires before the spirit of resigned submission to "Heaven's hand and will," and takes even a tone of triumph from self-approving (and somewhat "stern) exaltedness of zeal"* in "Liberty's defence." But the visual viaduct to Milton's mighty mind was not obstructed until vast resources had been conveyed by that channel to a

* Prisoner of Chillon. Byron.

most capacious reservoir. The veil fell upon his eye at a period when sight, as an auxiliary to the mind, had performed, and well performed, its function;—Wisdom was not “shut out” at that main entrance, till after long and laborious aggrandisement had so profusely stored the intellectual treasury with multifarious gems, that there needed a respite from accumulation. When, therefore, night came, it afforded a season for the assortment, review, and exposition of the treasures that had been amassed by the industry of the day. *What* augmentation of grandeur the Poet’s conceptions acquired by the mental abstractedness resulting from his blindness—to what particular degree the pinions of his fancy were invigorated by his ocular privation—may excite conjecture, to no very satisfactory ascertainment: yet, that his imagination received a new energy to its eagle wing—derived a portion of the vigor of its towering flight and impetus of its descent, from very inability to expend its strength in a visible and comparatively circumscribed sphere, I am disposed to be largely credulous.

E.—Political and religious feuds had lamentably distorted and exacerbated the judgments of those who were contemporaries with the Poet; and where the

practice on all hands was crimination and retort, the Charity which "endureth all things" could point approvingly to few. In all communities there are, it is to be feared, a numerous class of persons exceedingly keen in discerning the judicial dispensations of Providence, as they affect their fellow-creatures, and in construing the divine intention in the infliction of each calamity or apparent evil.—I have heard the *soi-disant* humble, the self-satisfied pure-in-heart, most odious oracles in the interpretation of affliction. Not to wander from the Poet, however, and touching your remarks concerning the beneficial influence of his blindness upon the character of his conceptions, I remember a noble burst of his indignation at an insinuation of his enemies, that his great deprivation was a mark of the divine displeasure. "If the choice were necessary," he declares, "I would prefer my blindness to yours: yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the colored surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. There is, as the Apostle has remarked, a way to strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive, as long as *that feebleness*

serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity in which I am enveloped the light of the divine presence more clearly shines!"* The Poet appears in this to favor the supposition that his physical deprivation was not at least detrimental to his intellectual faculties.

C.—Beneficial rather than detrimental, and greatly beneficial. The man of might was alone with his far-reaching and cyclopædic mind, by a cause profoundly sorrowful placed in fortunate isolation. I am surprised that Dr. Johnson should have appropriated so inconsiderable an amount of *probable* effect to a circumstance almost *compelling* the exercise of the imagination—the exploration of the fancy, and inciting to *more* adventurous enterprises a mind so ill at ease in inactivity as was Milton's. Campbell, too, alludes to his blindness in no tone of sanguine belief that "darkness aided intellectual thought:"† speaking of the "congenial impressions" made on Milton in Italy, by the frescos of Angelo and the pictures of Raphael, he says they may "possibly have been recalled in the formation of Milton's great poem, when his eyes were shut upon the world, and when he looked inwardly for 'godlike shapes and forms.'"

* Second Defence for the People of England.

But Sir Egerton Brydges is bolder, and asserts, that "his outward blindness did but strengthen his inward light. Perhaps (he adds,) but for this blindness his creative faculties had not been sufficiently concentrated to produce his great poem. He was now shut out from worldly distractions, and the day was as the covering calm of night to him."

E.—The calm of night, indeed, but not that night whose fetters bind down our bodies in salutary and soothing restraint, till "Morn's rosy hand unbars the gates of light," and we go forth athirst again for the elixir which Nature divinely and diffusely pours, like a rich baptismal unction on the early brow of Day. Alas! fruitless to *him* the upland walk for "unimpeded commerce with the sun," as

"Morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl;"

before him Night sat for ever on her ebon throne—*he* kindled no more at the rapture of the reawakening world; to *him* all uninfected now "the cheerful ways of men," the wild mirth of children, the glad face of Nature, the regal sun and radiated cloud,—

C.—Pardon me for thinking that you breathe a rather "browner horror" over the scene than belongs

to it reasonably. You forget the willingness of his submission to a "feebleness" that did not militate with mental vigor, and his own testimony that, so far from paralysing or prostrating the energies of his mind, it caused an influx of diviner light. The alone loss of sight (deranging no intellectual faculty or function) would in any case revive Memory, and in Milton's, if it did not lend sportive vivacity to Fancy, it urged it into the illimitable, and undoubtedly aided his conceptions of the incorporeal.

E.—Ay, but vivid as were Memory and Fancy, the very vividness with which they reminded him of what had once been rapture, must have made still sadder the remembrance of "a glory that had passed away" from him, in this life, for ever. Although in reference to his blindness he may occasionally

" have writ the style of gods,
And made a pish at sufferance,"

I have no doubt his really-acquiescent mood was transitory, and soon disturbed by the irksomeness of that enduring eclipse which veiled from him

" the silent looks of happy things."

The sorrowing sympathy we feel for Milton in his

affliction, is a far profounder feeling than that spontaneous pity which ever stirs in presence of the blind; of him above all men it may be emphatically said, that his heart knew its own bitterness in privation, as, in the bodying forth of his sublime imaginings, no stranger might intermeddle with its joy. In my opinion you touch his "ark of grief" too presumptuously. There was little in Milton—in awful and magnificent Milton—that was held in common with others; there might be a sameness of material elements, there was evidently the same liability to "all adversities which happen to the body;" but as it regards *men*, he "stood

" Among them but not of them, in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts."

Your especial idol has said of this remoteness from the crowd,

"Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;"*

and it is this intellectual isolation that excites, in me, a disposition towards intense regretfulness before the imaginary spectacle of the blind Poet. For, to thousands in similar exclusion from the visible world, the "drop serene" that shuts out light, only enthrones

* Wordsworth.

lethargy; their hearts possess ability to make to themselves an humble heaven with very scant appliances; their eye, even in the day of its power, might have been an "idle orb," as far as—in capacity of a spy, subserving the mind—it reconnoitred the visible in order to store and to fortify the intellectual. But to the unquenched orb of Milton, the silent symbol-language of Nature was most stirring and significant; he "heard a voice" where others could not, and saw wonders in the waste places: the calm languor that to others "idlesse might seem," had, for him, "its morality." By how many is the changing scenery in which they live and move regarded with lack-lustre eye; seeing, they see not: so that seed-time and harvest return, and the early and the latter rain, to them it is all one, whether Nature array herself in flowered chintz or in the floral sheen of spring-time; whether she o'erarch their daily path with dim vapor or with the witching cobalt sky and mother-o'-pearly cloud;—whether rude Boreas rumble through the lofty and long-drawn aisles of *her* temple—*their* daily walk, or whether the vast sunlit nave be inundated with commingling song;—all one is it, whether she do all but arrest them *per vi*, in garden or field or by wayside, to coax them into more cheerful contentment

by pleasant stories, all of *promise*—daily-perfecting *promise*; or whether she be attired in the half-mourning magnificence of her autumnal apparel, when promise has ripened into full fruition. But for him of whom we speak, these transformations had a potent charm; and when came

“The sweet season that bud and bloome forth brings,”

he would have it to be “stubbornness” not to go out and be eye-witness of the general joy. Profound, I believe, and permanent, was the plaint of Milton while under the enduring cloud.

C.—Wordsworth is known to be no admirer of Gray; yet, although I reverence the *dicta* of the great living Master, I cannot find an encomiastic tribute to Milton to rival the brilliant allusion in the Progress of Poesy, left us by that “consummate master of poetic diction:”—

“Nor second he, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of the abyss to spy;
He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:—
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble while they gaze,
He saw, but blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.”

E.—There is something Miltonic in that noble

motet—pity that so grand a swell should so soon die away! But as it relates to the hero—the Rider on seraph-wings, is it not a moving piece of mental imagery, capable of metamorphoses stranger in their reality than are many of the wonders of romance, that blind Old Man, in modest apparel seated beside his lowly portal, in all the pitiable impotency of his infirmity; “on evil days fallen, with dangers compassed, in darkness and solitude;” and then, (marvellous contrast between corporeal imbecility and mental puissance!) to view him as withdrawn from contact with the stir and toil of men and strife of “evil tongues,” as having entered into synods of gods, and with intellect expanded by archangelic intercourse, to hear him on his descent reporting “things invisible to mortal sight:”—nor uninteresting is it to reflect by what casual instrumentality were *recorded*

“The visions which arose without a sleep.”*

I humbly think, however—an error, perhaps, of “the voluntary taste of common intellect,” as opineth Sir Egerton Brydges—that the current of the Poet’s august conceptions is sometimes prejudicially effected by extraneous supplies;—the main fluxion is *troubled*

* Lament of Tasso. Byron.

by the tributary streams that at frequent intervals flow into it from the Pierian springs,

“ which rush,
No rill, but rather an o’erflowing flood.”*

Turning, as we have done, from Shakspeare to Milton,—from effusions, literally *effusions* of simplicity, to a production distinguished for scholarship,—the transition is doubtlessly unfavorable to Milton, as it regards general effectiveness. Ministers of Prudence defend us from less reverently contemplating the edifice of a wise master-builder, because of our inability to construe all its artistical points; and in the spacious arena of the Epic, as in a vast bazaar—here crescent, there meandering—a Gleaner of gems from many climes, a Pearl-diver from his very youth, might well dazzle weak eyes and confuse feeble faculties, when—his merchandise disposed in due array—he should invite the curious to inspect its gorgeous profusion. But then, the magically-moving *naïveté* of that greater Pet of Nature’s, whom she cradled by “lucid Avon,” tossed in infancy and juvenescence like a large-armed, honest, doating nurse whose fondlings are of terrific fervor; who taught the

* Cowper’s Translation of Milton’s Latin Poem to his Father.

chiel to take notes in strange situations for a darling of hers, and, when he attained his prime, so dowered him, that the scarce second Scion of whom we have discoursed, avers, in homage to his Senior, that kings, for a tomb like "my Shakspeare's," might long to die. I think I have previously mentioned to you a venerable friend, who, with a love of poetry of which Age has not chilled the ardency, is, strangely, little "moved by concord of sweet sounds," and trusts (in his own quaint expression,) "to find that heaven is something better than a large orchestra." His appreciation of glorious, untutored Will, and mighty, scholastic John, is mobocratically British.—"That ostentatious display of scholarship—that seizing upon every occasion to let the world know how well he was acquainted with all the realms of Art and Science, of classic and romantic lore, which is continually visible in Milton—is not at all to my taste (says he); but Willie's 'sweet neglect' of artistical embellishment—the ease with which his pen transfixes ideal images of grace and beauty, without casting carefully about for 'florid prose or honied rhyme,' and yet so frequently exquisite where seemingly unstudied—are features that when the eye looks upon, it *loves*." He who thus opineth was with me a few days since: he is a logician,

and has a habit of demanding "*proof*" upon assertion, which makes it advisable, before introducing to him an hypothesis, to ascertain that it has legs to stand on. During a cursory discussion upon Milton, I meekly ventured to hint how fair a field might *Moore* have found in Paradise, prior to our Ancestors' ejection: the pen that reported the Loves of the Angels, would not its current have crystallised, and flowed in irishues, as it told of the Garden, when, as with the yet-lingering pressure of the Creator's hand, it was pronounced "good," and was blissful as are all things which are born of God. 'Twas an evening lovely as that we just now witnessed, when my ancient ally was with me; and the beautiful time so forcibly suggested the primeval vesper-hour, ere Danger frowned through the darkness to agitate Dread, and when, by gentle graduation brooded over by the silver-winged Silence, the young world sunk, in the languor of long happiness to rest, in order to recruit its capacity of enjoyment for the repletion of the morrow;—in all the grandeur of its serenity, the time, I say, so much impressed me, that when my companion left, unused, albeit, to "spend my prodigal wits in bootless rhymes," I could not abstain from lamely chasing the idea of

THE APPROACH OF NIGHT IN EDEN.

To tranquillise the ecstatic Hours,
A soothing umber-shade was given,
Which Day eterne hath not in heaven—
Nor lent to Earth, unless that powers
Not infinite might wearied be
By o'er-prolonged felicity.
But who may paint—what accents tell
The infant Sun's sublime farewell?
The splendor of day were paler now
To the fulgency of his fiery brow,
As like a god, with radiance drest,
Whose glory gilds his couch of rest,
He sunk within the crimsoned West.

And now, the ruddy day-beams fleetly failing,
Night falls on Eden as a spirit's wing,
Fresh fragrance all th' odorous bowers exhaling,
Inspiring which their quires forget to sing:
The shadow spreads—a soft narcotic shield—
And flowers breathe, in downy slumber sealed ;—
Fair children all, yet one supremely sweet,
With whom, on wakening from its first repose,
An amorous Sunbeam, raptured, chanced to meet,
And kissed the blushing flowret to a Rose.

And streamlets rilled a softer tune
As o'er their ripples shed the Moon
A paler, scarce less lucid ray,
Than that which burnished them by day;
And while each bliss-o'erburdened sense
Was hushed in quietude intense,
There issued from a viewless clime,
Such strains as when, in quires sublime,
To gushing harps, the ardent hymn
Bursts from the bright-eyed cherubim;
While high above and from afar
Streamed melody from many a star:—
O, had those stars been Luna's *daughters*,
They might have paused in their career—
Perchance have left their stellar sphere—
To linger over Eden's waters,
Where, mirrored, shone each pearly gem
That glistened in Night's diadem,
Each lovely in the bright emblazoned sky
As Vestal fair to Beauty's crown aspiring,
Seen by the light of her own jetty eye,
Ere dimmed by tears—or too devout admiring.

Night reigned: soft Zephyrs that by day
Did now in sportive dalliance stray
Where'er a new Perfume had birth,
Would then in fragrance flee away
To tempt the mighty Sea to play.

The exulting Main, in giant mirth
And joyous unison with Earth,
Tossed high, in ecstasy, his spray.
But Rapture lulled itself to rest
When Phœbus Paradise had blest,
And Eden donned her night-array;
Then hushed grew Ocean, placid Sleep
In starlit slumber stilled the Deep.

'Twas an exquisite hour, that reign of Night,
So blissful and dreamy in its delight
That Earth might have longed for none other light ;
Yet silence seemed a state forlorn
When, from the roseate East, the Morn
Roused, and redecked, that vernal scene
To vivid joy, in sparkling sheen ;
Till Eden wore so glad a smile,
It might e'en seraphim beguile.

C.—The notion of the stars being daughters of the moon, would hardly pass unscathed by the good-humoured satire of your logical friend, I should think; nor would you escape censure from *le beau sexe*, for the imputation of vanity conveyed under a figure (you will excuse my candour,) rather difficult of digestion.

E.—When I “showed” to the quaint comrade of my youth this “wandering”* of my old age, he fixed on that identical figure for jocular criticism, remarking, “Your making the moon a mother of the stars suggests the application of a popular phrase to *comets*, if you include them in the number of Luna’s children; and nothing can be easier to conceive, than the virtuous astonishment of the better-behaved members of the starry family at the wild ways of their erratic sisters. I fancy I see the pale and prudish planets, looking at a comet in its disorderly courses, like a maid from the backwoods beholding the passing of a rail-train—half-frighted, half-amazed; and senses so rarified as yours are, might, I dare say, hear the cold virgins, as the blazing comet swept rudely by them, making inquiries as to the moon-mother’s knowledge of its whereabouts.” And then I was ungratefully attacked by the bairn whose rearing I have superintended from babyhood, (and whose quibble you curiously re-echo,) touching the offensive insinuation of vanity *aux dames*. But I am able to repel your accusation, that the figure is *outré*, unless you similarly impeach great

* “O! where have I been all this time?—how tended,
That none, for pity, show’d me how I wandered?”

Beaumont and Fletcher.

Milton: for in his paraphrase of the hundred and thirty-sixth psalm, he mentions with the Creator's works,

" The horned moon that shines by night,
Among her spangled *sisters* bright:"

and when you consider how, with "inaudible and noiseless step" she moves and watches, with more than a sister's patience, through the long night-hours, and enters (no respecter of persons, like her God!) through the tiniest lattice, so it be cleanly and uncurtained, and in sweet stealth advances till she kiss the face of the sleeping, leaving him bright dreams as her blessing; and how she passes away again, but lingeringly—oh! *very* lingeringly, to shine on other slumbers, until that dazzling "god who brings the Day, mounts up," and dissipates the visionary spell—in its silvery structure too ethereal to exist in the red, rapturous riot of the rousing Morn:—all this assiduity and solicitude of *Madame la Lune*, Sir Censor, you will admit to be more maternal than sisterly; so, unless your hardihood would cast a stone at John Milton, retract the charge of monstrosity in my describing the moon as a *mother*—of many lovely daughters.

C.—Mrs. Hemans would have made a glowing picture of the Garden, before the arch-tempter had

wrought his work there, and ere our father trembled at the voice of GOD. The scene is better suited for the description of an imaginative and noble-natured woman, than it is for man; for although woman is, with man, "fallen from her high estate," inasmuch as she is exempted far more than man from the knowledge of evil, and is far more conversant with "whatsoever things are pure," her qualifications to imagine a condition of innocence, are manifestly superior to his. In her Despondency and Aspiration, the highly-gifted Mrs. Hemans has poured out a torrent of brilliant conceptions—a guarantee of her power to have made a most luxuriant and living landscape of Eden, in the flush of its first perfection.

E.—When I read that Poem, I considered that, resplendent as is its language, great must have been the injury inflicted on her *thoughts*, by subjection to the *procès-verbal* necessary before the presentation of an Idea to the public. But—tolerate this one last remark—who may calculate the crippling effect of reducing to words the imagery of the wonderful and mighty mind of MILTON? Is it debatable, think you, —would it be by *any* one contested, that the author of the Paradise Lost, having no equal in the sublimity of his conceptions, had ever an equal sufferer

from the deficiencies of language adequate to their incorporation and expression—though Speech to him was like a deep-toned shell,* struck by a prophet's hand;—he was omnipotent over *numbers*. But the mean mind in motion is still meaner when it records that motion. Language and speech may communicate much that stirs within; they may interpret ideas whose outlines are defined—conceptions which dwell within compass: but when the imagination hurries into the far depths of a starry sky, or dives into the stirless mysteries of its own being, or rises in conjecture to the sphere of its ultimate destiny—then Thought is lost in the chaos of its own creations. For speech, potent prerogative as it is, hath no part in the subtler and intenser emotions which prevail, when the soul holdeth holy-day beyond the barriers of earth, and feels (heavenliest perception!) its affinity with a kingdom and kindred higher and holier than itself. But this rare, stirring sense of royalty has no audible articulation, nor may the after-mind, subdued and sunken, translate its visionary creation:—all that survives the deluge of divine light is known but as the shadowy phantasms of a dream—as a bright and beautiful illusion, which a breath destroyed!

* Gray's Ode—The Death of Hoel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ELDER AT HIS BIRTHPLACE.

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“SPIRIT-STIRRING THOMAS CARLYLE has fancifully balanced our Indian Empire against our WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.—Of course his loyal heart heaved the Empire aboon the beam. Descending from Men to *Words*, which could we Englanders best dispense with—our Colonies, or the word HOME?”—*E.*

IN the month of September in every year invariably, the Old Man, winsome Lady! with whom thou hast thus far borne, was wont to abandon Ivy Lodge, and, during the presidency-in-chief of the harvest-moon, to sojourn at the place of his birth: occasionally also in merry May his salutary face was turned thitherwards. Attendant on “these accustomed annual rounds,” there were “partings” at the Lodge, not by any means “sudden,” or of that romantic fervency which a bold poetic figure describes as pressing the heart’s life out, but full enough of pathos to dim the

Elder's eye. E. accounted for such emotions, and justified what sterner systems of flesh and blood might designate as weakness or effeminacy, by the argument that these autumnal visitations were made in serious rather than in holiday meaning; that Time, with seemingly-increasing celerity, was conducting him into close proximity with that critical withdrawing-gate by which all Earth's human company retire, after visits varying in duration, but by authoritative premonition announced and by accumulating evidence approved to terminate about the threescore-and-tenth year, elude as we may the fatal beck of humankind's gaunt Scene-shifter; and that when, as the ancient of years, he returned to the spot from whence was dated his beginning of days, he moved, though not with heavy heart, "as though his steps were tow'rds a tomb," for when his little life should be rounded by its second sleep, it was there, in his own familiar sod, that he desired to be laid down.

Of the Elder's feathered dependents two especial favorites, the Queen Dowager and Sir Fred, were chosen to accompany him into country quarters, a measure adopted not so much from E.'s passion for music as to avert their self-inflicted martyrdom in the cause of abstinency—a suicidal zeal in which, or

desperate chagrin at his absence, had once nearly reduced them to barebones during an autumnal recess of the rightful Purveyor. The impassive Benjamin was indispensable as *compagnon de voyage*, so that he also migrated; and while the rural sojourn lasted, the guardianship of the Lodge was delegated to a trusty old official who first entered the service in the year 10 (eighteen prior centuries understood); and when the *pro tem.* governor had lent respectful audience to E.'s last iteration of injunctions, *de totis rebus et quibusdam aliis*, he sustained in his stewardship a burden of responsibility, compared with which Lord Ashburton's was a bagatelle, when he undertook the business of the boundary-question and the ticklish task of pacifying noisy brother Jonathan.

A green valley bosoming an old grey temple down in the fertile south of Hants, was the scene whereon E.'s eyes first opened to a world very "unintelligible" to infants and philosophers. A sentiment planted by invisible agency, and fostered by unseen dew that gathers at the dawn of sentiency, stimulates in after-life, even in the sordid, a complacent regard for the spot of his first unconscious *début* in the character of Mewler and Puker in a nurse's arms;—relaxing to the risible muscles of the most austere is the reflection,

that he surmounts the actual hearth where his infantine riotings were rocked into repose, which Colic, not Care, invaded then; or that he paces, with the step of manly vigor, the sphere of his early enterprises in the critical art of self-dependent locomotion.—Firmly, indeed, is the ligature which binds man to his birthplace woven into the curious fabric of the heart's affections; strongly twined must it be there with the "silver cord," to resist unbrokenly all subsequent idolatries—to abide ineradicable by Time, and maintain its prominent relief through all his motley augmentation of devices. Faith is avowedly fantastical in many of its propositions; but certainly that article cannot be deemed a fantasy which contends, that mankind are marked by local as well as by ancestral lineaments;—that from *the place* in which "careless childhood strayed," as from a metaphysical matrix, we deduce to our moral constitution a conformity or semi-conformity to its distinctive features. It is the intellectual character receiving its idiosyncrasy in secret, as did the physical frame its members;—the imperceptible fashioning of its faculties "yet being imperfect" or "when as yet there was none of them." The tokens of this local lineality may remain undeveloped for years: If in early life we start into

scenic extremes—if the embryo-man be hurried, while yet a child, from the hamlet to a city, and thrust into the hot throng, then its long-continued pressure is of resistless power: nor only of power upon the character in that peculiarly-elastic period, but also on caution-and-cavil-bound maturity the influence successfully works, subjugating by sheer incessancy of operation; for we are wisely made of *plastic* clay, of which Circumstance (always under omniscient control) is the potter; and in the constantly-revolving crucible of Custom the sternest stuff is shapen into a fitness for its uses. But the hour arrives to many, (and especially about the period of the first of two momentous crises, when the frivolities of youth are found distasteful and the earnest Man is consolidating,) that in half-active, half-involuntary retrospection, the thinking being, in his review of bygone times and scenes, is reminded by Memory—that mental resurrectionist—of many sensations quickened in a season which, if it were careless, was sometimes visited by Thought in its vagrancy; and as he grows increasingly intent upon the hours when an holiday made a light heart, and a light heart was happiness, a host of long-dormant emotions revive—emotions too dreamy for clear, comprehensible recog-

nition, which swam along the young heart's current, like fleecy clouds that float about the sun—pleasant then to feel in *their* sphere, as are the fleecy clouds to look at, when in amber-and-carmine glory they linger in the western heavens, steeped in the splendor of the day-god's exit. And if in infancy it were the lot of such reflective being to be "nursed at happy distance" from the jaundiced atmosphere of dense cities, he may remember how the waterfall seduced him from the sport, to sit and gaze at its prismatic flow; and how the echoes of mirth seemed a sound profane in the sanctity of an old wood's silence; or how, on the steep hill's summit and awearied, he laid himself down and would have slept, but that his eye was attracted heavenwards, and all incapable of comprehending the spell which kept him wakeful, he there in charmed recumbency acknowledged

"The witchery of the soft blue sky."

- When, a week after E.'s arrival, I followed him to the home of his childhood, and mingled with its many charms, I felt this faith in the moulding influence of familiar scenery substantiated; for in his Waller-like affection for "harmony, and grace, and gentlest beauty," it was easy to recognise the taste

and disposition which Nature unthwarted would, as a matter of course, foster to their full growth and strength, through the medium primarily of *contact*—of habitual gazing upon and heart-intercourse with the surpassing loveliness encinctured in that tranquil vale—itself to be regarded by such as look earnestly into this vast Illustrated Volume, the World we live in, as a vignette, elaborately wrought and purposed to display how sweet a smile animates all features—despite the digital-on-lip monition of Silence—when Beauty, on mountain or in valley, hath mutual occupancy with Quietude. And tracing, with the Old Man, the free hills over which his foot-of-youth had sprung lustily, the deep glades, stream-intersected fields, and verdant woods now robing in their autumnal vestment, it was without the range of possibilities to resist a certain contagion engendered by his enthusiastic pride in his birthplace.

More than six thousand souls are said to locate in the bosom and about the extremities of that fair valley, before whose charms, had he by chance confronted them, Lorraine would surely have set up his easel;—the Laureate, could he yet see them and *create* associations, would not leave Tintern Abbey Revisited in its pre-eminency among home-touches, for of this

“ green pastoral landscape,” as of that, a noble time-worn Abbey is the primal grace;—and could it come in the halcyon hues of sweet eventide under survey of Sir Christopher North, the world might rejoice in a supplementary Recreation, and his lustrous picture of Windermere at Sunset not longer live alone in its glory.

As to mine Ancient, pride in the natural beauties of this Valley-of-the-Test was tantamount to a passion; and it was not unamusing to note his prurient impatience for a candidate whom to initiate and accompany in his “ noviciate of delight.” So it was hastily upon the clearance of that comfortablest of all repasts, the matutinal, that we sallied forth towards his former “ daily walks and ancient neighbourhood.” Really that day, apart from the pleasures of our reconnoitre, and on the score of its intrinsic merits, throws over the reminiscence of a gorgeous reality a charm not inferior to the *couleur-de-rose* effect striven for by poet-painters of Luxury and the East. Patient living and moving long before under such frequency of misrepresentation as God’s meek sky is subject to in British Babylon, and groping (so to say) in heaven’s light seen under double disparagement—exterior dimness brought about by sombrous vapors, inter-

changed officially with denseness from interior cob-web, in charitable semi-political superstition conserved from crushing besom of destruction through years of multiplying spider-film on film;—patient abiding under comparative eclipse might have predisposed us, beneath that bright-blue, bare-breasted sky, to somewhat fraternise in feeling with an old man, fabricator of our primeval *pantalons*, who, awhile blinded by removable cataract, on first scarce-reaccess of light exclaimed, “A thousand suns!” Yet in good truth might that day of *exploitation* have been given and accepted in its entirety as a Septembrual master-piece,—a day whose respirations, one would fancy, were sufficiently redolent with rich autumnal odours to have embalmed, and so in some manner have preserved, its loveliness. Beauty of which even eloquence could make but faint praise, and fragrance, not to be syllabled, rising up from Earth, as incense from an altar co-extensive with, and impregnating, the wide firmament, afforded no *unsuitable* support to that theory of the day’s self-embalming; but an old enactment and innumerable precedents were adverse, and the flushed Hours—predestined victims of Consumption—looked round them and yielded-up the ghost, after the manner of a long line of predecessors.

That very estimable item in the details of a sound constitution—freedom of debate, is often exercised without reference to equitable or even reasonable duration; and for our own part we have greater confidence that good would accrue from a fair debating-society sort of restriction upon *talk*, especially wild political talk, than from political suffrage sidled into ballot-boxes. Rambling regenerators, advocating short parliaments, could not consistently oppose a system for abbreviating speeches; else, with an influx from the league, a weary yarn of verbiage, wrought by half-a-dozen orators, might stretch its suffocating length over an entire session. Not to lose my own loquacious Guide by wandering into the arid wastes of political oratory, nor to class his with the vain babblings of the disaffected, it is expedient at once to observe, that throughout his garrulous guidance few pauses admitted further remark from the object guided than a consenting “yea,” to eulogy passed upon ubiquitous loveliness. Taciturn never, here, upon his natal soil, E. took to himself the part of commentator-in-chief as a right, allowed by human sense of becomingness and animal.—The proclamation of Morn by another herald on this individual chanticleer’s rightful stercoraceous pinnacle—*could* such infringe-

ment be tolerated by Propriety or the lawful possessor?

We have left the Elder's abode, and are passing through a churchyard—the northern front of a noble pile before us, in all the impressiveness of antiquity and stateliness of cathedral proportions.

“But pause we not now,” said E. “for more than momentary admiration of this holy temple, which imposes reverent contemplation for its use-sake, and to which Time lends a solemnising grandeur, like plaintive holy melody at sun-decline to a radiant sabbath-eve. Though there rest above its massive sanctity “the clear blue air of Peace,” yet the glad Morning-Sun smiles on its walls with a power which makes the time exultative, and one's temper in turbulent unison with the time: an altogether calmer hour therefore for survey there—the serene eve for the silent shrine, to which our spirits rather than our bodies go, touched with “a sense sublime” that the Spirit which pervades all places is there more palpably, and that in the air we breathe within those hallowed precincts there mingles an empyrean unction. Hold our weakness in derision, ye whose strong minds esteem as superstitious a pious regard for *consecrated* walls—think scorn of the pleasant

land to which our hearts wing their way in this "idolatry;" but not more innocuous were ponderous artillery levelled at a flight of fairies, than are your "wise saws" spent at the root of healthful Supposition. Affections withal, whose name is Legion, rise up in rhythmic and prosaic argument, protesting against your devastating ideal worlds whose bliss commoves the deep inner fount of Ecstasy, and liberates emotions uninterpretable in the cold idioms of this working world.

"Call 'The Counterpart of Paradise' a title unmerited by this place present, and the offering of a pair of turtledoves shall not appease our righteous indignation.—Nor am I prepared to permit the Curse to have cast its shadow over the scene to which I refer thy comparisons. Here, by this pathway in each day trodden by every intermediate step between the totterings of infancy and old age, here pealed, in May, from the fascinated foliage of this wayside tree, most musical, most melancholy tones, to the original of which, when struck in Eden by the primal nightingale, our mother Eve might charmedly have listened, and by her grandbairns-male be not upbraided for bidding her goodman Adam suspend *his* soft discourse, while the sweetest of the feathered kind poured out

his amorous plaint to the loveliest of the floral. Here, though on both hands are habitations, here ceaselessly he chanted through the still night-watches,—yon mimic waterfall and he twin rufflers of ‘the raven-down of Darkness’—as it swelled whelmingly, that nightingale-soprano, upon the low water-bass, carrying divine illusions into the dreams of the innocent sleeping within the circle of his song. He, of lovely lays the lavish melodist, metes out his minstrelsy listless to the praises of our kind and the reproaches of his own, and, from slumber broken by his ear-piercing song, uprouses the lithe lark—

“ Companion of the Morning-star at dawn,
And of the dawn co-herald ;—

minstrel scarce second in our love, for he, right bonnie bird, mounts with no fretful note through the grey humid ether to mingle his matinsong with the music of the spheres, where, high in heaven, he sees, far down in the fulgent East, the crimson heralds of the King of Day, long ere the monarch dawns upon our world—though he, too, sovereign Sol, moves at this season with no sluggard-step towards us: nor may we marvel much at his celerity;—the Earth, all-glorious in adornments, like a loving bride awaits his presence

for consummation of happiness; and much good would it do fair dames and 'gentlemen in England, then a-bed,' to come out and see how the fine old Fire-King frowns away the beleaguered clouds that interpose 'twixt him and the bride he is rising royally to bless, till the outspread profusion of her charms is all unveiled, and at her ten thousand sparkling recognitions of her lord, his frown relaxes to a smile, that, in its infectious power to gladden, makes the beholder's blood dash jocosely against its veiny channels, like jetty spray which, when merry winds kiss trippingly his sunny waves, old Ocean throws about in the recklessness of mirth, not ire.

"A stream of water, and—where 'scaly colonies' are known to abound, as in the Test here—its inseparable agitators in human shape, belaboring its innocent surface. The pursuit of Walton, nathless the persuasives of Sir Christopher, and Izaak's own plaintive desire

"To angle on, and hope to have
A quiet passage to the grave,"

has had no pleasure for me, since, of auld lang syne, I heard Andrew Marvell weeping his slain fawn,—sovereign Shakspeare correcting the notion prevalent

as to *petty* corporal pangs,—and saw (for it is a thing to see,) Pope's picture of confiding Meekness in the form of a lamb, vainly spending its last look of fondness upon Ruthlessness in the form of man,—and warmed at the furnaces of fine human feeling that glow about the pages of Cowper. These, and other hearings, seeings, and feelings, have jointly originated one strong sentiment, sunk deeply into our sense of humanity,—no fugitive chord of appeal to Pity, but an abiding principle, rendering it more than mere squeamish affectation of tenderness which reprobates, when followed for voluntary pastime, the sports that have their consummation in the agonies of God's creatures.

“ Another stream, branching from the copious Test—in main-flow and streamlets the Nile to our valley's fertility, chief giver of ‘glory to the grass.’ A landscape, however fair its form, if it want the fertilising feature of a broad river and its subsidiaries, in sun or moonlight seen like luminous meandering veins, is comparatively but as a vision of dry bones, or comely frame wanting the flowing heart. And yet *another* stream! source of the clatter of this brawling mill: like a place imperial, under occasional aspects, how placid the head, how foamy and contentious the

tail. By-and-by we will amble along the upward bank, for right dear to us is water-side walking, save when that stealthiest of isms, Rheumatism, assumes a menacing attitude on the stream's margin, and clouds, "black with breeding thunder" or heavily-laden with Caledonian mist, fresh from the north and dusky as colliers, are discharging their embargoes. Standing, in the lull of care, on an "enamelled bank," a lucid stream is a spectacle so beguiling to both eye and mind, that, unfelt, the fancy winds its way into the heart that it is *stedfast* in its bright serenity; nor till the heavens lower or a rude wind ruffles its radiant tranquillity does the conviction return, that in glory or in gloom it is passing, perpetually passing away:—ever, ever eloquent as a Maximist to mortal man; for in how many delicious moods, and mostly when "life has seemed a thing divine," have we forgotten its incessant fluxion; and peaceful in perchance a perilous oblivion, might still have forgotten, had not a cloud overshadowed our comfort, and sent out its monitory voice—'Onwards! unretreatingly onwards, to the ocean in which all waters meet!'

"Not more seemingly-stirless is yon blue veil, through which all angels of good taste must pleasedly be peering in a morn like this—not more waveless

that cerulean drapery which hides from us their happy faces, than to this moment was the element here in its upper flow. Our heart, though slackened in its paces, resumes its wonted speed at smiles, seen in the looks of happy things or human face divine; and therefore is it now a welcome incident, the advent of that sportive Zephyr, who hath found his way to the Sunbeams here, and, like new-encountering mates emboldened by the indulgent Mother's known consent, merrily they gambol on the stream's bosom. 'Twas like the acumen of Edmund the Gentle to feel that even a bower of bliss were incomplete without

‘The gentle warbling wind, low answering to all;’

and in ‘that sweet isle where Venus keeps her court,’ ‘glorious John’ Dryden, with a like discretion, requires the ingredient of ‘a fanning wind,’ in concert with the ‘purling streams,’ to constitute an effective lullaby to Iphigenia. These ripples, which seem to rise in response to ‘the warbling wind,’ give a happier look to the stream's face than it wears in sad or shining stillness: Water, in bright day or ‘starry night, is beautiful and fair,’ even in calm—so is the sleeping face of Beauty, though before the closed eye there flit no dreamy visions of heaven's bliss to dimple

the cheek—so is a garden before sunrise, with its flowers yet ‘full of the dew of heaven as a lamb’s fleece;’ but when the sun rises, the dew that hung like tears upon the leaves and flowers, glows on them like a garniture of stars—as if, having no duty in the Night-queen’s service while the Day-king was in the ascendant, her starry retinue had abandoned belt and wain and milky way, to celestialise terrestrial flower-beds. Accept, however, ‘the glory and the gleam’ to be verily but luminous dew, the dew-drops’ debt to the sun’s ray is as Beauty’s to the *riante* Joy.

“We say, in soberness not surpassed by Father Mathew, Fie upon all pharisaical assumption, but the man or woman who scoffs at the oral attribute of flowers, is a subject for devout pity. The Laureate (long life to him!) as High-priest of the True Faith, would not be unwilling to receive the names of and offer his prayers for the would-be credulous—for the obdurate, peradventure, his sighs. Surely as many of us as are concerned in making meet use of our five senses, are ‘in bonds’ to the Poets—chiefly to such as trace for us the bold or delicate anatomy and *life* of things,—to see, as Cowley mellifuously sings,

‘how prettily they smile,
And hear how prettily they talk.’

What barren infidelity now in the idea, that the perfume borne

‘ Upon the gentle wing of this calm-breathing wind,’

was caught from taciturn children of Flora in that miller’s garden. Tush! no fragrance this of voiceless flowers.—There were love-confessions in course of murmuring among them when the breeze came by, and having loitered to listen to their amours, ’tis their odorous secrets that he is babbling about. Plaintive-pleasaunt Robert Herrick sets all scruples against the reasonableness of this belief at rest for ever: the stiff-neckedst sceptic must, tearfully it may be, confess himself chastened and improved by these few words of his to weeping Primroses:

‘ Speak, whimp’ring younglings, and make known

The reason why

Ye droop and weep.

Is it for want of sleep

Or childish lullable?

Or, that ye have not seen as yet

The violet?

Or brought a kisse

From that sweetheart to this?

No, no: this sorrow, shown

By your teares shed,

Wo’d have this lecture read,

That things of greatest, so of meanest, worth,

Conceived with grief are, and with teares brought forth.’

Robert Herrick's flowers have mostly 'paly faces,' and a habit of dropping dolefully their heads and sighing deeply in their discourse; few of them look up with that innocent pertness of eye, which, when it accosts you, would gaze you into good humor though you had just heard of a depression of the stocks—monetary not floral. But pensive Robert goes among the gay ephemeral things like the thoughtful tender-hearted Pastor of a parish among his little ones, who, while he would not have them one whit less happy, but rather say, with amiable Bowles, 'Sport on!' moralises upon their mirth, mindful that their young hearts are born to sorrow, and seeing, with his instructed eye,

' what Grief must nurture for the sky,
What Death must fashion for eternity.'

Yet is Robert's language, in speaking to or of the flowers such as tender fathers use to their wee things, and such as only true love prompts; so may the Amaranth have for ever lost its *mournful* significancy to the immortal, Robert Herrick.

"What with the loud hum of this exulting bee, who has thrice flown foul of our phiz at a broadside, honey-burdened no doubt to very blindness—what

with his stentorian murmur and the shrill uproar on both hands of these bacchanals in clover, ycleped grasshoppers, we are positively in danger of losing the supreme satisfaction of hearing ourself. A brief hint *à propos*, in *thy* ear, O absolute Abstainer from inebriating beverages, touching a contrary propensity of that determined *habitué* of dewy lily-bells, the ‘humdrum grasshopper.’ In ourself, an attachment to a liquid which thou anathematisest, is too matured a weed to be eradicated—nor are the spectacles yet invented by means of which, with the narrative of a certain marriage in Cana in memory, we could discern the poison lurking in temperate administrations of a certain creature-comfort, whose property it is to make the heart glad. Yet, barring our prejudices, which are ultra in this matter, and conceding that a countenance by the grape made cheerful may be condemnable, and that there *may* be a chaster virtue in tealeaves, we commend to thy proselytising efforts the grasshopper family, consisting as it does of deil-may-care kind of gentry, who are said by Abraham Cowley and Richard Lovelace (both unexceptionable authorities,) to drink immoderately—and *voilà* at this moment a debauchee, in whom the poppy is evidently at work, taking double bounds in dissolute despera-

tion. Cowley, if our memory be not misty (as it commonly is till our after-dinner tumbler verges a second time towards a vacuum), the aforesaid Abraham denominates the wine consumed in this shameless wight's potations, as 'Dewy Morning's,' which Dame Nature, illicitly, and with no fear of excisemen before her eyes, pours into yellow-cups and blue-bottles in such extravagant profusion, that every green field is in effect a *carte blanche* to the thirsty grasshopper. The testimony of Lovelace is still more conclusive, and affirms the dewbibber to be addicted to a novel and rather poetic *bonne bouche*;—he, Richard Lovelace, deponeth the accused to be 'drunk every night with a delicious tear!' and finding no palliation for a line of conduct so abandoned, we commit the profligate to the consideration of the tents.

"We have mounted this Green-hill at various paces and in various moods, at intervals since '80, and should esteem it no venial sin to pursue our upward march without turning at this point to admire. Test this Valley-of-the-Test by Cowper's standard of beauty, and the scene approves itself a champion as to its charms, since, daily viewed, it daily pleases. Let the dew have had its dazzling hour with the daybeams, and 'bright Phœbus in his

strength' have routed incipient chills which harbour in the heather a little after dawn, and then let any or all in whom is a heart of love to God's works sit here upon this hillside; and not by dint of devout invocation to Fancy to waft the soul forth on light wings into ether that obliterates the *real*, but by rapt silent survey of the placid face of this actual landscape, should he or they confess, on the breaking of the spell, how perfectly had been steeped in oblivion the consciousness of mutability—how entirely they felt, now that feeling had returned to them,

' As if the moving time had been
A thing as stedfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away.'

To more than one artist have we propounded this question, What needs this scene to render it consummate? and the limners, like echoes, have each responded, 'What!' And many a time too have we thought, that of the accumulated graces gathered in yon amphitheatre 'twould be only considerate to forewarn spring, summer, and autumn travellers, to scenic enchantment susceptible, ere, speeding from the West, they are whirled from the ambush of that highway-line of trees into the scene's sudden glory,

where all Nature's works are perfect and where Man's chiefest work is his best work—an habitation for his God! The sheltering hills—see how they throw their circling arms around that lowland loveliness, and how themselves, at base and side and summit, are studded with trees, dense in their foliage as clouds that cradle storms—summer-storms, having red lightnings in their retinue, which burnish their cloudy cradle; for touched is all that leafy pride with the first tint of the golden autumnal dye,—the forest's hectic-flush which beautifies but surely precedes Decay. And—gazing even charmedly—fleetly upon the sense of sight steals languor, from yonder lucid streams which at this eminence are neither heard nor seen to flow, and from the fields that lay out there in most expansive idlesse, and from the prostrate herd infected by the prevailing *paresse*: and drowsily now upon the ear falls the far-off melody of the invisible lark, who rises from his home with a heart too full of thankful song to abide his nest's limits, and (saving our exhausting self,) pours out the sole articulate annunciation of life in heaven above or on the earth beneath. And the very air and light seem in conspiracy with things below to close our thoughts from every sphere save that in which at ' this still season

of repose and peace' we are contented dwellers; and so might the influence operate, and we forget our high inheritance and cease to aspire, were it not for the homily, to the heart, not ear, addressed by yon grey sanctuary, towering beyond all structures secular into 'the deep, blue, glorious heavens,'—symbolising a nobler 'house not made with hands, eternal,' which our longing souls look to gain by some bright starry pathway through the bewitching azure;—

'Why else so often doth the searching eye
Roam through the scope of sky?'

"Thanks to the priestly influence of yonder holy pile, which recalls us from a state of too-entire contentment with the ravishments of earth to a remembrance of 'the royalties of heaven;' and again we say, Welcome to uninterrupted enjoyment of his freedom from weak prejudice, is the sturdy soul who smiles in scorn at the doctrine that especial sanctity is in the place where God descends to commune with His contrite ones. O! to our heart of hearts, linked is that shrine, not only by high hopes of glory which kindle highest there, but by indestructible bonds originating with rite of baptism, bridal, burial, and twined about our better thoughts by the invisible

hand of Memory. We side with those who maintain the faith that Poetry, as from a central and perennial fount, flows right through the Universal Heart—though in very various effusion; and often is its current impeded, nor seldom altogether polluted and turned awry. There is exceeding danger of such impediment to or perversion of this genial bosom-flow, where Schism of a captious kind prevails: the healthy current in the veins and natural charities in the heart are apt to suffer—sometimes to utter submersion—by the atribilious swamp, fed and frowned over by Contumacy;—yet, disclaiming glamour, willingly would we challenge a scorner whose bosom's feelings are not wholly petrified, to remain insensible to the influence of *the place*, when, at evensong, within those walls, the eloquent and earnest Priest, whose main theme is his Master's mercy, allures to brighter worlds his listening flock, himself oppressed at times with the benign burden of his message. For while he urges on the world-worn to aspire after those ever-blissful seats whose 'omnipotently-guarded battlements Sorrow can never scale,' the deep crimson radiance of the setting sun pours in at many an eminent ingress, as if in visible attestation of his verbal portraiture: 'tis as a shechinah or halo from

‘the living throne and sapphire blaze,’ and lends indescribable power to the persuasions of our Faith—to which, while the spirit listens, strongly it stirs to put on etherial panoply, and launch away on that resplendent flood, and float on the rich undulations of angelic song, to the clime of Perfect and Perpetual Joy.

“ We have no sympathy with field-preaching, and shudder to see the sword of the Spirit so profanely handled that its rude usage incites to ribaldry; and if you are called, in justification, to witness proofs of an effectual home-thrust, a miserable spectacle confronts you of laceration and contortion, and Reason goaded to the verge of idiocy or black abyss of despair. But out-of-door perception should quicken well-tempered praise;—then ought to stir ‘the feeling infinite:’ and certain pens with whose poetic flow there mingles cogent theology, might interestingly—perhaps suavisely—maintain a gentle controversy with our church-divines, alleging that all this *obvious* creation—by Chateaubriand called ‘the imagination of the Deity rendered visible;’ by Carlyle, ‘the visible Thought of God’—might advisedly be more frequently enlarged upon, and the recital of the Great Spirit’s claims to our allegiance be more efficiently

enforced by winning demonstrations that, though humankind be dull and disaffected, a host of things around us—to our humiliation if we felt aright—reflect back Heaven's goodness in the beauty and deep joy of gratitude. Meseems a mild teacher, himself impressed, *might* so clarify the dim eye and attune the drowsy ear, that Love, born of Rapture, should spread its wings for delighted upward flight, at a thousand novel impulses. For ever open are the pages of this vast Volume of the Universe, and yet how few discern that they are richly illuminated with elaborate initials traced by the finger of the Lofty One? From the incessantly-reiterated doctrinal terms of the Deity one finds refreshing alterative pasture in the company of endearing Bishop Taylor: not that he is unmindful of the priest's imperative part, but that he so oft enlists Nature as an auxiliary in his ministrations. How the having promise of the life which now is, and that which is to come, throws its joyous lambent light over the page that bears this passage: —'I am fallen into the hands of publicans and sequestrators, and they have taken all from me. What now? *Let me look about me.* They have left me sun, and moon, and fire, and water; a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve;

and I can still discourse, and unless I list they have not taken away my merry countenance, and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience: they have still left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too: and still I sleep, and digest, and eat, and drink; I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbours' pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights—that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God himself.' Thus pious Jeremy:—and, O well-judging Lady Blessington, seeing that in *your* case a bishopric is out of the question, we canonised you with peculiar pomp from the hour we knew your faith, that 'The poetry of our lives is—like our religion—kept apart from our thoughts: neither influence us as they ought. We should be wiser and happier if, instead of secluding them in some secret shrine in our hearts, we suffered their humanising qualities to temper our habitual words and actions.'

* * * *

“ And now, ‘beneath the branches high’ of this brave oak, the doctrine that

‘ Here ye may sleep
In the moss so deep
While the sun is so warm and so weary,
And sweetly awake
As the sun through the brake
Bids the fauvette and white-throat sing cheery,’

is no cunningly-devised fable of Mary—helpmeet of William Howitt, but a sound of good tidings, ingeniously proclaimed by one of Nature’s Own heralds, wooing worn mankind to partake of rest and of refreshing, without money and without price. And, like The Boundless in His Benevolence, the arms of Nature are ever opened widest to the world-wearied. Still—the Poet being the ‘ Consecrator,’ as truly says John Cameron—still, Nature’s guests have need of such enlightenment as poets shed upon the bounty and the beauty of her hospitality—appreciating which, the participator, though he be a peasant, feels, while there is

‘ A grandeur in the beatings of his heart,’

that he occupies a temple, whose flooring is the variegated earth and whose canopy is the sheltering wing of God. True that an unwitting wayfarer might repose here, and in somnolence forget his cares and his fatigue;—such solace hath ‘tired nature’s sweet

Restorer' for all but the crime-imbrued; but, uninstructed by the Poet, he would lie down without perceiving of how elaborate a texture is this couch of mossy greensward—more efflorescent than a regal bridal-bed; and would cast but a careless look aloft, content that his slumber would be sheltered from rays, too fervent, haply, for sky-facing sleepers, but which Sol, who is lending his countenance to the ungarnered crops, could not consistently cool down, though the consequence were here and there an ague. He, the uninitiated tarrier, would not and could not scan these curtains with an admiring eye, perceiving how, as to fashion, from supports in multifarious device of branch and bough, are suspended festoons of foliage of dear Nature's own fantastic and delightful hanging; neither, as to hue, could he critically remark the exceeding richness of this drapery of sky-surmounted green in all its manifold varieties of shade—here, intensely deep, secluded from the sun; there transparent, in immediate reciprocity of his rays: nor perchance might he smile to mark—though a misanthrope could hardly avert his eyes from *this* joy—that, as if defying expulsion, the stray beams *will* peep through and play about on sward and sleeper. Nor would he notice how the playful breeze *nestles* in the branches;

—it does not care to bustle through them, you perceive, but delights to dally there; without doubt blabbing—a wily whisperer!—the love-gossip of yonder gardens—for all God’s creatures like to hear of love, and see now in what glad commotion is the old tree’s crown, and how each several leaf sparkles as though it were a pendent oscillating emerald! We are enamoured of *life*, we repeat, and would rather, in the flush of morn, see foliage in motion than when immobile. In leafy fluctuation too the birds catch a vivid impulse; an ecstasy electrifies each tiny wing, preventing comfort in quiescence, either on tipsy treetop or in the bright yellow broom; and if the breeze, as it brings along the flower-scents, be a wee bit frolicsome, the more wealthily will the bonny sky-rangers charter it with sounds of song, till the vagrant zephyr speeds onwards like a viewless argosy, whose ocean is the firmament, and whose freight is mirthful music and perfume.

“ O ENGLAND! e’en now in this thy palmy day, when wars and rumors of wars have died away upon thine ear—e’en now, as when the garden yielded up its Queen to be a battle-badge, are *all* thy children kind and natural? No more may adverse factions jeopardise thy monarch’s crown—and pleasant is it to

an old man's heart to body thee forth among nations as a Forest King, fearful in provocation, but on whom the Una of our love and loyalty confidingly and caressingly may lay her hand: yet to despoliating Commerce are thy silvan scenes becoming rapidly defenceless prey. Who, now, in the cherished territory of his ancestral *home*, may bid effective defiance to the huge crushing Juggernaut of thy idolisation, and say as with authority, *Here* shall thy wheels be stayed! The empire of Art is *too* fast subverting the world of Nature—Innocency is being swallowed up by Invention—‘the perpetual hills do bow:’ were we in sighing mood, a syllogism here how conclusively showing cause! But the evil shall not come in our days! The murmuring rills that harbour hereabouts the Naiads of our dreams, shall not ruthlessly be blotted out, nor the woodbine wall of the Sylphs’ haunt be broken down by semi-barbaric intrusionists in *our* time; nor will we further mourn for what may be but ‘false alarms of Fear,’ but rather shout,

“O ENGLAND! ‘little body with a mighty heart!’ as felt in the halcyon contentment and profuse loveliness of this, one of that heart’s most sweet recesses, to the pilgrim of complacent mind and of contracted will, still teeming with delight are thy many ‘primrose

meadow-paths and hamlets low.' Not that thou hast therein to gratify the voluptuary, or stir the lover of extremes in nature; no rolling storm, whose thunders shake the soul, nor ruling calm whose luxury etiolates; no dizzy alp nor darkling depth: and yet full glorious art thou, England! By thy surface-treasures seen in minstered city, in luxuriant hamlet, in majestic wood:—by thy struggles with and trophies won from Thralldom; by the palace-homes of thine enfeebled Brave; by thy many halls of Charity; by thy love of Honor; by thy very ether, which *cannot* nourish slaves:—by the magnitude of thy power, which is all but infinite, and by thy docility to due control, which is all but perfect. Yet these are but the fruits of that primary glory of which yon hoary holy pile maketh proclamation and saith, The Faith which dignifies thy Sons!"

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